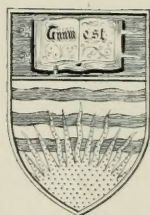


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Effective individuals are those who know how to think + act for themselves.

Outline of group thinking procedure - 35.

genuine discussion - 18; 22;

THE PROCESS OF GROUP THINKING


HARRISON SACKET ELLIOTT
Professor in Union Theological Seminary

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THE GENERAL BOARD OF
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TO
MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER
WHO PROVIDED MY FIRST TRAINING
IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES



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INTRODUCTION

This book discusses the processes by which democratic participation may be secured in the deliberations and decisions of groups small and large. The book gathers up the results of more than fifteen years of experience in the direct chairmanship of discussion, in the training of leaders, and in the direction of conferences and conventions in which small group discussions and general assembly sessions were related. This experience commenced with an effort to determine what could be done to make more effective the small Bible discussion groups promoted by the student Christian Associations in the colleges and in the student summer conferences. During the earlier years, the work was carried on very largely in connection with various departments of the Young Men's Christian Association, but more recently it has included a number of other agencies and experience with the process in academic teaching. Careful attention has been given to the psychological and educational principles involved.

The use of group thinking in various forms of teaching is not considered in this book, although the suggestions should prove useful to those in academic work. This volume confines itself entirely to the consideration of group thinking as developed in voluntary groups of various types.

A book which gathers up the results of experience with group thinking in all sections of the United States and in Europe naturally involves the contribution of thousands who have participated in such discussions, and the more direct cooperation of scores of individuals who have helped in the chairmanship of groups and in the direction of conferences and conventions. To these the author recognizes his debt, even though he is unable to acknowledge it in any adequate manner.

Particularly is he under obligation to certain individuals with whom he has worked more directly; to Ethel Cutler of the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations for her cooperation in the study of the problems of the student Bible study groups; to Jay A. Urice and to Abel J. Gregg of the National Council of the Young Men's Christian Associations with whom he worked directly on a number of important group discussion enterprises; to E. C. Carter and *The Inquiry* for providing during recent years a fellowship for those most interested in democratic processes. Special thanks are due to Frederick Harris, without whose encouragement and cooperation this work would probably never have been undertaken and who has been, during all of the developments, a counselor and fellow thinker on the problems involved; and to my wife, Grace Loucks Elliott, in association with whom were worked out some of the most important developments of the process here described and who cooperated in the final revision of the manuscript.

HARRISON SACKET ELLIOTT.

New York City,
January, 1928.

CHAPTER I

A METHODOLOGY FOR DEMOCRACY

The aim of true democracy is to secure the active participation of every individual up to the limit of his capacity in the conduct of all his social, vocational, and political affairs. It is intended to be all-inclusive with the qualification noted; it is meant to take cognizance of the immature child, of the moron, and even of the criminal. It embraces every social relationship, whether of a president to all American citizens, or a man to a single companion.

While democracy really involves a philosophy of life and an attitude toward people, it requires also a technique. The difficulty in securing democracy has been that more attention has been paid to defending it as a philosophy than to developing the methodology by which it could be made to function in life. If all are to participate up to the limit of their capacity in the groupings of which they are a part, they must learn how to participate. Just to postulate democratic participation, without making practical provision for it to be effectively carried out, will result either in the capture of the control of the group by an oligarchic few or in confusion which will discredit the whole theory.

Attention to the methodology of democracy is particularly important because our practice at present is representative rather than democratic. Consequently, the training of individuals fits them for a representative rather than a democratic form of group life. The rank and file of individuals have some part in choosing those who will do their thinking and deciding for them, and they have varying degrees of control over their representatives; but there is very little provision for their direct participation.

Democracy is for most people a political conception. In the

popular mind it means letting everybody have a vote. The government of the United States is, however, not a democracy; and as far as we can tell, its founders never contemplated the possibility that the people should directly participate. They framed "representative" institutions with the understanding that popular participation would begin and end with the choosing of representatives. In Great Britain there are three estates—the Crown, the Lords, and the Commons. The Lords sit personally in Parliament, but the Commons are present in their "representatives." We elect people to govern us, to do most of our political thinking and acting for us. Representative government marks a decided advance upon the pure autocracy of an absolute monarch; but it falls very far short of being the rule of the rank and file of people.

The control of the people over their representatives varies. Under the American governmental system, the representative keeps his "ear to the ground" to know the desires and attitudes of his constituency; but the people usually have no way of calling him to account except by refusing to reelect him, and they are likely to forget at the time of an election the things which their representatives have done. In Great Britain, where the representative may at any time have to face his reelection on the basis of his attitude on current issues, the people do have the chance to participate more directly.

This same representative principle extends throughout life. Committees and commissions of various organizations and industries must, it is true, report back and secure the approval of their proposals, but there is usually no provision for any thoroughgoing discussion of the questions. Minor modifications, complete rejection or adoption, or referring back again to the committee are about all for which provision is made. Family decisions, even though they may involve the welfare of girls and boys in their teens, are usually made by the parents, as the recognized representatives and rulers of the family. School boards and other representative bodies are chosen to decide what shall be taught and teachers are selected to carry out

their desires. Even the widely heralded "project method" has up to the present time usually involved the participation by pupils in enterprises selected, planned, and directed by teachers.

The growing citizen finds things little different in his struggles with the economic phases of existence. As a worker, whether for wages or a small salary, his cooperation is little sought except to carry out orders laid upon him. As a stockholder in a corporation, he casts a vote for representatives to manage his affairs; as a policy holder in a mutual insurance company, he is strictly under orders or his responsibility is represented by the privilege of casting a rather futile vote. His honest opinion is seldom noticed. In churches, it is assumed that the minister has been elected to represent the congregation in working out plans and policies. All that is asked from the congregation is formal approval and financial support. There is very little real participation by the membership. The same can be said of any community movement. Recognized or selected representatives of the people work out the plans and make the proposals.

Under such circumstances, the problem is not to secure participation, but to win assent. The representatives of the people do not attempt to secure genuine consideration of these various questions by the people, but approval of the proposals brought to them. Indeed, under the present circumstances, an attempt to secure participation would often bring confusion and delay action unnecessarily. Consequently, the method is propaganda or salesmanship; that is, a method by which the people are led to adopt the proposals of the representatives with as little discussion and modification as possible. No favorable consideration is given to possible alternatives. If they are considered at all it is to show the reasons they should not be adopted. The entire emphasis is upon the desirable elements in the proposal made. Thus, the individuals who make up our society are trained from their earliest days to look to their representatives for the direction of their thought and action. Indeed, skill in salesmanship has been developed to a supreme

point of perfection among us. The technique of bringing proposed courses of action before the people for their approval has been elaborated with scrupulous care.

Many believe that we have now reached the time when it is possible to move from a representative organization of life to a more truly democratic form of group participation. Indeed, we are at the present time, in a very real sense, at the forking of the road. There are evidences in home, school, industry, and community life of the desire for such participation and definite demands have been made in various quarters. At the same time, because of the inefficiencies and dangers where democracy has been attempted without adequate attention to the development of skill in the process, there is an increase in the fear of democracy and active opposition to it. We are in the midst of a decided swing in certain circles to extreme authoritative control. This is seen in the return to dictatorship in government. It is manifest in the refuge of many in the absolute authority offered in certain religious developments. Even within so-called modernism, there are many evidences that some leaders miss the certainty and authority of a more conservative religion. One hundred per cent Americanism and unquestioning patriotism are manifestations of the same in government. The fear of Bolshevism and of other radical movements is this manifestation in economic affairs. Along side of the schools with free methods are found the educational institutions appealing more strongly than ever to the old sanctions and asking for a security based on authority. These two opposing tendencies face us. We may move at the present time constructively into a more truly democratic organization of life; or we may return to a control more authoritative than in recent years.

There are several considerations which make it important to those who are interested in true progress that we shall develop skill in the technique of true participation and enable the members of groups to think together upon the situations and questions which face them. The first is the difficulty in securing

the intelligent carrying out of proposals decided upon by representatives and brought by them to the people. Experimental education has placed beside all attempts to tell people what they ought to believe and ought to do a very large question mark. The reason for this is at once evident. The representatives have had an opportunity to study the question and to understand it thoroughly, and the conclusions to which they come have to them meaning and significance. But when they bring to the people these conclusions without carrying them through the process by which they have reached such conclusions, the people assent with little real understanding or conviction. In carrying out the plans, the people run into many difficulties and they soon discover that they have no enthusiasm for the course of action, since they never understood it nor helped to lay it down.

Of course, the end of every educational process is action. Experience is teaching us—slowly and painfully, it is true—that people live only by ideals that they themselves really understand, and carry out effectively only such plans as they have had a part in framing. Any attitude or point of view becomes one's own only as he has the chance to work it out. This accounts for the frequent despair of instructors and popular leaders. "I have slaved and fought to teach that boy what is good and honorable and right, yet he has gone out and done a discreditable thing," is the disheartened cry of the teacher. "I have shown the people the clean and honorable way to the achievement of happy and prosperous community life, yet they wallow in the mire," is the complaint of the reformer. It will not work, that is all there is about it. Men and women accomplish satisfactorily only what they understand. The mind is not a marvelous transformer into which ideals and standards can be poured by an instructor with the assurance that these ideals and standards will be applied effectively in given situations.

The mere furnishing of sound information or excellent advice does not seem in practice to secure the character results

that are desired. If a human being is to be honest or to have good will or to be reliable, he will be so only as he has worked out this way of action in situation after situation until it becomes a habit of life. An ideal can be effective in life as a whole only in proportion to the variety of situations in which it is actually applied.

The second consideration has to do with the effect upon the individuals concerned. Whatever may be the effect upon the output, there can be little question that a democratic process is the best way to grow men and women. It is he who does the thinking, who faces the problems, who makes the plans, who alone achieves both the growth and the happiness. Our present ideal and practice of leadership reserve these supreme values to the leaders. Life has become, for a large number of people, pure drudgery. Men become "robots," machines for executing other people's desires. The leaders grow, the individuals in the crowd decline. Of course, goaded to the limit, people revolt. Then, quite naturally, a mob of men and women trained to dependency but come suddenly into the possession of power mess things up terribly; they have neither the wisdom nor the moderation necessary for direct social action, nor have they been taught how to use the technicians in conducting government. A permanently effective society can hardly be formed out of ineffective individuals; effective individuals are those who know how to think and act for themselves.

The representative form of life gives to the few the real joys of life. They are the ones who have the opportunity to take part in affairs worth while. In the interests of people, a methodology is necessary by which they may have the opportunity and the joy of sharing in making the decisions of life, rather than simply taking direction in carrying them out. The latter is to make life drudgery, the former is to give it meaning.

A third consideration is important because so large a proportion of an individual's life occurs in groups that a sound technique for group thinking seems essential. Often it is as-

sumed that people act as individuals, and that groups are but collections of individuals. This is not true. A great proportion of life is made up of action in some corporate relationship. Any individual who has reached an age where his life takes him beyond the home is in many groups. Some of these groupings are more permanent or fundamental in the life of the community. Such groupings as the home, the school, the various business and industrial firms, the municipality are among these. Some of them are more restricted, but of very compelling interest, such as the gang, the fraternity, and the neighborhood group of friends. Others, again, are temporary, such as groups formed around enterprises or hobbies.

On many questions, the group acts as a group. This is true of a fraternity, of a family, of a school. In such groups, the individuals who are considering what the group shall do are the ones who are concerned in the decisions and responsible for carrying them out. Every member of the group is directly involved and all are supposed to be present. Illustrations of this type of group meeting are the family council, the general student meeting, the gathering of the members of a church, association, or fraternal club, the general shop meeting, the old New England town meeting, and certain school and community gatherings.

If the decision is really to be a group decision, a method is necessary by which the group can make up its mind as a group. Those who share in carrying out a decision must have an opportunity to share in planning what is to be done. If the action is to satisfy the members of the group and if they are to live and work together harmoniously, the decision must represent results to which all are adjusted and in which all may participate. In the process of group thinking, individual members contribute to the results, and in turn their own ideas and desires are moulded by the group, so that corporate action is possible. Group thinking is the process by which the group may decide and plan as a group. It is therefore essential to effective corporate action.

Group thinking is offered as a possible methodology for securing democratic participation. If it can be learned, family councils would become significant; project method in education would represent a real participation in planning and executing school life. Attention to this process would make it possible for members of churches and social agencies and for citizens in the community and in the nation to participate intelligently and actively in matters of community and national concern.

Experience with the democratic process of group discussion, even in the present limited field of application, has yielded results that are of such significance that those who have participated in the experience are eager for further experimentation. The ranks of the skeptics are filled chiefly by those who themselves have never participated in a democratic enterprise. This statement is intended not to beg the question but to emphasize the necessity of experimentation in this particular field. It seems absurd to those who take a strictly expert view of leadership to expect contributions of value toward the solution of life problems from any but highly trained individuals. Indeed, it is almost impossible to understand the creative power of a group unless one has participated in the process. We need to see groups at work democratically to appreciate how the give and take of a pure discussion, which is not a debate, throws new light on old ideas, shifts emphases, corrects aberrations, and even softens emotional antagonisms. The die-hard debater ready to beat the world into submission finds that he is not facing opponents at all. The group is eager to get all that he has of value to contribute. A simple idea presented by a humble member is taken up with care and handled gently lest a promising infant be destroyed by too rough handling at the start. Such ideas caught up by the group grow to unexpected proportions, and make for cooperation in a search for truth. Groups made up of very ordinary people have proved essentially creative to a degree that could hardly have been hoped for beforehand.

CHAPTER II

MISCONCEPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF GROUP THINKING

There are so many misconceptions of group thinking that it is necessary to distinguish what it is from what it is not. While any method must be judged by what it is able to accomplish in practice rather than by what it claims in theory, still it is necessary to distinguish the process of group thinking from its imitations. Frequently, it is assumed that any kind of discussion in a group is group thinking. This is no more true than that anybody who has so-called thoughts coursing through his brain is engaged in a genuine thinking process. Not all individuals who face life situations are making decisions on a basis of thought. Some are acting on impulse; others are following the crowd; and still others are taking authority without question. Because an individual considers an issue, it does not follow that he is facing it in a scientific manner.

Group thinking involves in the discussions and decisions of a group the same kind of process which an individual follows when he is thinking effectively. The person whose judgment we trust is the one who does not act on impulse or authority or tradition. He is the one who takes into consideration present and past experience; who enriches his judgment with emotion, and who tempers his emotion with judgment. He is the one who honestly examines the evidence and weighs various courses of action. His decision represents his conviction as to what is most worth while.

Individual ability to think well is not an endowment. It is the result of experience. It has to be learned. The same is true of group thinking. Just as there are individuals who act entirely on authority, so there are groups which are controlled by a leader and take their orders from a dictator, benevolent or

otherwise. Just as there are individuals who follow tradition, so there are groups where tradition is the determining factor in action. Just as there are individuals who act upon impulse, so there are groups who act on suggestion and do whatever any member of the group may propose. Group thinking is the process of reliable and convincing group decision, just as individual thinking is the process of reliable and convincing individual decision.

An individual may think through a question without speaking aloud, because his thoughts are all known to him. But in a group the spoken sharing of individual thoughts is necessary that each member of the group may be aware of that which the others are thinking. Consequently, group thinking involves not only that the individuals consider the question, but that they share with each other the progress of their thinking. Therefore, group thinking is sometimes called group discussion. As a matter of fact, individual thinking is really a sort of discussion process within one's own mind. As an individual explores a situation, as he considers this possibility and that, as he verifies facts and compares opinions, as he looks at the question from this point of view and the other, he is really talking it over with himself.

Because group thinking involves not only the consideration of the question by the members individually but also their sharing with one another the progress of their thinking, it has both advantages and disadvantages over individual thinking. In the contribution of each member of the group, the thinking of the other members is both stimulated and modified. When individuals pool the data which they have and share the results of their own thinking, ordinarily more resources and more varied points of view are made available than when a single individual is thinking alone. Of course, if the members of the group are mediocre individuals, the sum total of their results may not seem to compare favorably with the thinking of a very able and experienced individual, who, in his versatility, gathers up in himself more data and more points of view than

do some groups. Such an individual, placed in a group of far less able people, will find group thinking a hindrance to his progress and a waste of time. But it is no test of the comparative effectiveness of individual and group thinking to compare the results of versatile individual thinking with those of mediocre group thinking. The only fair test is to compare the individual and the group thinking of persons of similar ability. Experience would seem to indicate that the results in group thinking will usually be greater than those of the individual thinking of persons of similar capacity.

There is no magic in this process. Experience has warned us that not all groups are cooperative and that not all group discussion is creative. Unless the conditions are observed, group discussions may end in a turbulent riot or a hopeless insipidity. It is not fair to judge a true group process by travesties upon it which those who are reasonably skilled in the process would condemn. It is easy for a group to talk but difficult for it to do real thinking. In conducting democratic discussion we are attempting a difficult feat. It seems impossible to convince would-be experimenters of this truth until things come tumbling down about their ears. Well-meaning friends of group thinking have dealt it the hardest blows. The result has been the appearance of curious burlesques which thoughtful people, quite rightfully, cannot take seriously. To be fair with group thinking we must not confuse it with its substitutes. As an introduction to genuine group thinking, it may be in order to consider some of the imperfect or even ridiculous attempts at group participation.

Group Thinking Must Be Learned

Group thinking must be distinguished from a haphazard talkfest, where persons meet to consider a question with neither plan nor procedure and with but little basis of fact or evidence. Democracy is not secured by throwing questions to a crowd without any preliminary preparation: that is anarchy. Such a gathering usually wastes an unpardonable amount of

time, works in a circle, arrives nowhere, and frequently ends with the individuals more confused about the issue than when they came. No significant results may be expected from any such procedure. Particularly is this true when the whole set of the group is toward some other method.

It is of importance to recognize the extent to which intelligent independence and self-direction in any realm are an achievement. The ability to be an independent, self-directing personality is present in possibility in original nature; but this possibility is made an actuality only through the proper kind of education. It does not develop, unless given favoring conditions. The same is true of a group. Independent, self-directing group conduct is also an achievement. Merely to offer democracy to a group does not mean that the group is able to conduct itself democratically. Just as individual independence comes gradually, first in more restricted and then in wider areas of life, so independence in a group comes gradually, first in more restricted and then in ever and ever widening areas of conduct. Whether the group be a family, a gang, a class in school, or a nation, it cannot change suddenly with any success from complete autocratic control to entirely independent self-direction.

For instance, a man complained that democracy did not work in summer camps and conferences. He illustrated his point by saying that in a certain conference, where there had been no self-direction, they told the delegates that they could run the camp. "Then," said he, "these young people abolished all regulations as to hours, smashed up the furniture and the equipment, and turned the whole camp into confusion." What the directors had done was to ask a group of boys and girls, who had had no experience in running their own affairs, to take charge of the life of a camp in a strange situation away from the ordinary controls. The result was the only result to be expected under the circumstances—disastrous anarchy. In such a camp the reasonable procedure would have been, first, to give the boys and girls opportunity to become adjusted to the

life of the camp under the sort of control from adults to which they had been accustomed, and then to have established democratic procedure in the simpler aspects of camp life. As a tradition was built up and persons became experienced, the second year would have made possible more democracy. By the end of three or four years this camp might have become a completely self-directing camp. So, in a nation, to overthrow the czar and introduce the proletariat without any training in democracy, frequently has substituted one dictatorship for another. If the dictatorship of the proletariat is used as the first step toward giving the people training in democracy, then it may be justified temporarily.

This means that in many a group autocratic directorship may at first be necessary. The question is the use made of the directorship. If the director uses this authority for his own purposes, then democracy will never be achieved. If, however, he obtains control to bring order out of chaos and sets in motion processes toward democracy, then dictatorship may be the first step toward freedom. The leader has first to secure authority and be respected, and then by slow and steady process bring one area after another of the life of the group within the self-direction of the group members.

Many persons seem to recognize no other possibilities for the chairman except to take absolute and autocratic direction or else to keep hands off altogether and let the discussion proceed haphazardly. It is true that if the chairman takes autocratic control, the group does little thinking for itself. But it is equally true that if a group is thrown suddenly on its own resources, the discussion is likely to be confused and profitless. The duty of the chairman in a group unaccustomed to thinking is to take whatever control of the discussion is necessary to secure a genuine and profitable consideration of the question. This may involve assuming at first complete control; but it should be control of the procedure of the group rather than dictation of its conclusions. This will form the first step toward the freedom of the group in thinking and deciding for itself. For an individual

or a group to think effectively requires confidence on the one hand, and ability in thinking on the other. Both are an achievement, the result of practice. They grow up together, confidence increasing as skill is developed. The business of the chairman is to develop the skill and confidence of the group. He can secure suggestions for doing this from the methods most rewarding in the development of skill in other lines. Take swimming, for example. To throw an individual into the water without aid or direction may so frighten him that he will never learn to swim, and certainly in any case it means confused floundering and unnecessary trial and error learning. To have him depend on a life preserver and water wings means that he grows no more independent of them. But for a teacher to furnish temporarily the confidence which the life preserver brings, and then to teach him how to swim, results in growing confidence and skill; and ere long he can swim by himself. The same is true in a group. To throw it suddenly into a discussion ends in confusion and fear. To act permanently as life preserver results in the group growing more dependent upon this support. To take responsibility for complete direction of the procedure at first and at the same time consciously to train to independence in the thinking process results in confidence coming as skill increases; and eventually a self-directing group, able to handle its own affairs, is the result. It is important that the emphasis shall be on *how* to think; and not on *what* to think. To teach a group what to think keeps it continuously dependent upon the leader. To teach it how to think means that the individuals of the group become each day less dependent upon the leader.

In this connection, we must recognize that it is an even greater travesty on democratic participation when a leader deliberately makes use of the forms of group discussion in order to secure general assent to a conclusion already fixed. This is just a phase of improper propaganda, but it is peculiarly obnoxious because it casts a very definite discredit upon the process whose forms it observes. Of course, people are not im-

posed upon as often as their leaders suppose. A clever leader, however, frequently makes a crowd believe it is going its own way when, as a matter of fact, it is actually being gently led forward to a prearranged decision. A common way of accomplishing this is to "plant" special speakers. The great danger is that it frequently represents an amazing likeness to democratic discussion and misleads those who are endeavoring to estimate the value of free participation. One of the greatest difficulties in the endeavor to enlist in discussion a group new to the democratic process is the deep-seated suspicion that some such trick is being played upon it. It is hard to believe that this is not some new and subtle form of propaganda.

Group Thinking Utilizes the Contribution of All

Another misconception is the assumption, frequently made, that a process of democratic participation involves the elimination of all the more able and more expert and the participation only by those of lesser ability. Many say that group discussion involves the contribution only of the mediocre and that its advocates have a blind confidence that the result will be wisdom and creativity. It must be admitted at once that not all individual contributions to the pursuit of truth are valuable. Further, in any group, whether under democratic or autocratic organization, some will have contributions to make which are more valuable than those of others. Democracy, however, does not involve the elimination of those who have previously been the leaders, the teachers, the adults, or others in positions of responsibility. Some seem to assume that democracy in the family means turning the conduct of the home over to the children; democracy in school involves transferring all authority to the pupils; democracy in industry would give the running of the plant exclusively to the workmen; democracy in a camp would eliminate all leaders; democracy in a nation would turn out all who have been in posts of responsibility. As a matter of fact, this is not democracy, because democracy means the participation of all who are involved in a situation, each in pro-

portion to his ability. A democracy will never be achieved in a family until parents and children learn how to live and work together. Student government will never be effective until it is a government of students and teachers working cooperatively. Industrial democracy will never achieve its real possibilities until capital and labor are working together to make of industry a real enterprise. Democracy will never reach its goal in municipal, state, and national life until some method is developed by which the people may really share with the representatives they have chosen in the working out of problems of government. Group thinking, a technique for democratic participation, involves the sharing of all, each according to his ability.

Nor does the adoption of group thinking involve the elimination of the prophet and the prophetic from life. It is not a question of whether there will be great prophetic spirits but of how the prophet will make his contribution. Too frequently he is set over against his generation. He becomes the lone voice protesting against the sins of the present or seeking to challenge to some new course of action. His attacks arouse the wrath of his generation and his efforts to secure action frequently bring opposition. His suggestions are misunderstood and unheeded at the time, even though his utterances may become the guiding principles of the next generation. But in a group, where all are working together to find the way, the prophet's creative abilities are given a chance to contribute. He may become the person most welcomed, for in proportion as the democratic approach is accepted will persons with new points of view and suggestions for improvement be welcomed as members of the group. The prophet in a democratic process need not be a person who is condemned and martyred by his generation and recognized and followed only by the next. He may be rather the respected, honored member of a group all of which are trying to find the way of progress.

After all, the great prophet has always been the sort of person who would be most useful if a democratic process were

employed. Thinking takes place as persons become dissatisfied with things as they are and see them in contrast with things as they might be. It is when the people are stirred to a search for better ways of living that a democratic process is possible. The real prophet in every age is this sort of person. He is attempting to arouse folk out of their lethargy and out of their self-satisfaction by pointing out their shortcomings and inadequacies. Because life is conducted upon an autocratic basis, he is often put over against his age. It rises in opposition. But where there is opportunity for him to share with the group, he can become the leader of a new movement. The prophet is in this regard decidedly different from the reformer. The prophet is the person who helps to arouse his generation and joins with them in an earnest search for better ways of living; the reformer is a person who has a solution which he wishes adopted, and is attempting to press against all others. The result of the reformer's committal to pet solutions is often to divide into warring camps persons who are interested in the same goal. When the prophet becomes the reformer, he is the prophet who has crystallized his discontent with the present order into a program which must win against other programs even though securing its victory hurts the cause in which he is interested. Thus the reformer is usually a hindrance to a democratic process, while the prophet is a most helpful aid to creative group thinking. Group thinking, then, is a process which relates all involved in a situation, the more able, the more mature, with the less able and the less mature, in a process in which all have the opportunity to contribute in proportion to their ability.

Group Thinking Depends Upon Information

Group thinking is not a process by which individuals pool their ignorance with the expectation that reliable results will follow. A dozen, a hundred, or even a thousand contributions of misinformation and unreliable evidence do not bring a sum total of reliability. The group is just as dependent as is the in-

dividual upon reliable data and upon the contribution of the expert. The difference in group thinking is only in the expert's relation to the group. Instead of being the authority who dictates to the group, his resources are made available to the group members for use in reaching their own conclusions. This problem will be considered more fully in the chapter on The Place of Information and the Expert (see Chap. IX).

Group Thinking Is Different from Argument

Group discussion is not an argument nor a debate. In an argument the persons representing each side usually have their minds made up. Their purpose is to convince or defeat their opponents. In genuine discussion, on the other hand, folk come with open mind and with problems, expecting to get new light on their problem in working with others in search for a solution. In debate, one desires to know what another person thinks in order that he may devise arguments to convince him he is wrong. In discussion, one wishes to know what the other person thinks in order that he may get more light on his own problem or may cooperate with the other persons in solving their common problem.

If persons who have predetermined a question come to a group where this question is to be discussed, they come not to get light upon it or to join with others in trying to find a solution, but rather to put over their point of view on the group and to secure the adoption of their own solutions by the others. If a person with an opposing point of view participates in the discussion, these persons who have prejudged the question listen but they listen not to learn from him but in order that they may oppose and overthrow his point of view.

The ordinary methods of argument and debate, carried on in deliberative groups, are really a denial of a true democratic process. Usually, such deliberations represent a contest in which one side is trying to defeat the other, or the pleading of a case, in which the person or the committee making the presentation is seeking to win the group. Indeed, the whole pro-

cedure is one of contest. Care is taken to present only the facts which support one's position, and to ignore or minimize the weight of the considerations in opposition. Anything which withholds important information or tends to put a peculiar construction on facts defeats the democratic process at the start. Every favorable association is given one's own side and attempts are frequently made to cast aspersions upon the opposition. The common weapon is sarcasm or ridicule, used without reference to meeting the argument. Heckling is employed in order to anger the opponents and make it more easy to defeat them. A person of ready wit tries to make an opposing viewpoint look ridiculous and to laugh it out of court. Just as he tries to make his own side appear patriotic, unselfish, philanthropic, so he tries to make the opposition appear radical, atheistic, bolshevistic. In order to have a point adopted, attempts may be made to stampede the crowd by enthusiasm and emotional appeal. Speakers primed "to wind up the debate" are one of democracy's most common dangers. They usually come not only with their minds already made up but also with their speeches prepared. Combat may be necessary at times: that is another question. But¹¹ truth is not usually secured by downing the other side.¹² Debates leave the defeated party as convinced of the justice of its cause as are the winners.

The democratic process would substitute for the present conflict of parties and the gladiatorial contests between authorities a method of true discussion involving the participation of each, according to his capacity. Though the clear conclusion is seldom formulated, men and women the world over are beginning to see the futility of trying to arrive at truth by the methods of combat. Long ago, Benjamin Disraeli said to a doubting world: "War is never a solution." The difficulty is fundamental. Whenever the issues are so drawn that our energies are expended in making a case, we are hopelessly deflected from the search for truth. The democratic process would bring all ideas into the circle of discussion on an equal basis not as cases

to be defended but as possible parts of the whole truth. The attitude of the democratic group toward an expressed conviction is the same as the attitude of a scientist toward what appears as a piece of suggestive evidence. The genuine scientist does not say, "Now, this is awkward, how can I refute it?" He says, "This is interesting. Let us give it its full weight and see its possibilities." The true discussion group fertilizes and waters and nurses along each suggestion. Of course, its implications must be subjected to criticism but always in the manner in which scientific evidence is subjected to criticism. There is in true democracy an earnest desire to see that we do not miss any contribution to the solution of our problems, no matter how unpromising it may seem at first glance.

Limitations of Group Thinking

As was to be expected, attempts have been made in the enthusiasm of discovery to conduct democratic procedure at inappropriate times and under impossible circumstances. Some of the limitations must be quite evident to anyone with even a slight experience in the management of human affairs. A few may be noted here:

1. When policies are agreed upon in any group or in any organization, most of the executive direction of activities agreed upon by all must fall to individuals. Assemblies or committees cannot administer detailed efforts calling for continuous supervision. It must be borne in mind, however, that where the individuals concerned have come to a general agreement regarding a policy, there is nothing inconsistent with a devotion to democracy in their detailing certain persons "to see the thing through." It must never be supposed that the democratic process means a continual tinkering with machinery during the process of execution.

2. Since the very essence of the democratic process is fore-sight, in crises where there is no time for conference of any kind, democratic participation is impracticable. When an accident occurs in a crowded street, the immediate necessity is for

effective control of the situation under one head. Even if the plan of the one who assumes control is far from perfect, it is an improvement on chaos in an emergency. A crisis sometimes comes in a home or a school, where summary discipline seems necessary. An uprising occurs in a nation, and there seems nothing to do but quell the disturbance. Here again, however, a word of caution must be said. Certain accidents are what the insurance companies call "acts of God." For such we are seldom to blame. But by far the larger number of crises are due to our own previous failure in foresight. Accidents occur because of antecedent failures; disciplinary crises grow out of bad handling of normal times; and uprisings in government are usually a protest against someone's mismanagement or tyranny. It is no justification of autocracy that we sometimes need one strong leader to pull us out of a mess into which another strong leader has led us. Abnormal situations these are: they must be recognized as such. While recognizing that such autocratic control in crises may be necessary, we must admit at the same time the obligation upon us to reduce the number of such critical situations.

3. There are also situations in which particular issues are not discussable. This does not mean that the issues are beyond discussion, but that under the circumstances obtaining at the moment there is no possibility of any gain in opening the question. There are some things which parents must decide for very young children. There are some occasions where a teacher must lay down the law. There are certain realms of life not yet within the democratic possibility of groups. Democracy is possible for any persons only within the area of life in which those persons can take responsibility. In the progressive development of democracy, therefore, more and more areas of life come within the reach of democratic action. Little children can act only within the restricted circle of the home or of the playmate group; there is no chance of their taking responsibility effectively in municipal, state, or national affairs. When they go to school the range of democratic action is

widened because they are taking responsibility in a wider area. So these areas continue to widen until complete adulthood is reached.

Adults frequently run into situations where a frank treatment of a topic is essentially dangerous at the moment. The chief point to be remembered here is that on such exceptional occasions perfect frankness should be the rule. For example, in certain denominational colleges the question arises as to holding dances in the institution. The issue is put up to the students with a strong plea for a decision against the proposal. The truth is that the college would lose a heavy endowment if dancing were permitted, and the authorities have no intention of permitting it. It would be far better to say so at once: it is quite unfair to let the student body imagine it is deciding a question when in reality it has no voice. Surely a child will have more confidence in a parent who frankly says that it is merely a question of obedience in a particular case than in one who tries to persuade the child it is his choice. Non-discussable questions are exceptional but they do arise in an imperfect human order. The democratic principle is not affected provided there is complete and decisive frankness under such conditions.

True group thinking, then, is an alternative to the settling of important questions by appeal to authority or conflict in debate. This procedure is being tried out in many homes, in some schools, in many educational groups outside academic auspices, in some national societies, in a few national and international conventions, and here and there in community enterprises. It has been used very little in any purely political function. These experiments vary greatly in their general conduct and the results, fortunately, present the same wide variation. They are making their way in the face of many difficulties due to ignorance of the nature of the process, absence of skill in leadership, lack of exchange of experience, and considerable emotional opposition directed against the concep-

tion of popular participation. But their success seems to warrant experimentation on a still wider scale. It is with the hope of recording some of the results to date and of encouraging this wider experimentation that this book is written.

CHAPTER III

THE PROCEDURE IN GROUP THINKING

The procedure of group thinking can best be understood by some simple illustrations. A party in New York City wishes to go to San Francisco. The questions to be decided are at once evident and seem quite simple: what route, train, and type of accommodation will be chosen. But it is at once evident that these specific and immediate questions cannot be answered in general but only in relation to the particular situation of which they are a part. Without a knowledge of the factors in the situation, an intelligent decision is impossible; and with a change in these factors, an entirely different answer might be given to the questions. It is essential to understand not only the immediate questions but the setting in which these questions develop. Is the trip for business or pleasure? Are there appointments which would determine the time of leaving New York and the necessary time of arrival in San Francisco, which would make speed a factor? How much of a consideration is expense? What interest is there in scenery? What places, if any, are to be visited en route? Are there persons in such a state of health or such attitude toward travel that provisions for comfort must be given special attention? The question then becomes: what route, train, and accommodations should be selected in the light of these important factors in the situation and personal considerations as they are found in this particular group.

The next step is to discover the possibilities in the light of the restrictions and desires imposed by the particular situation of the group. The group members will make any suggestions growing out of their former experience or the experience of others with which they are acquainted. But unless it is a group the members of which are particularly experienced in getting

to San Francisco, they probably will not have adequate and accurate information on which to make a decision. So they will assign an individual or a committee to look up possibilities. In the meantime, certain other members of the group may agree to secure information from persons whom they know who have had useful experience in getting to San Francisco. This individual or committee will probably go to the place where such research can be most effectively carried on; namely, an information or travel bureau. This is a place where there are persons who embody in themselves expert information and where books such as time-tables, railway guides, and tourists' handbooks are collected, for which the individuals in charge act as consulting librarians.

If the decision of route and train is important, the committee will seek information from more than one point of view. If the timetable or the representative of a single road only is consulted it usually represents just as one-sided a picture as any textbook presentation. It is one railroad's idea of the best way to get to San Francisco, with all the advantages presented and the disadvantages omitted or made to seem of little importance. To consult representatives of various railroads and different timetables, comparing information and considerations set forth, is the more reliable method. The railway guide, the tourist handbook, and the general information or travel bureau make available information on all the possibilities because they are not held to secure patronage for any particular road but to see that accurate information is furnished.

The railway guide is not read through in the hope that in the course of this general and systematic study the necessary information will be found, nor is the man at the information bureau asked for an account of the various trains which are leaving the station. Equally inadequate is the undefined question: "How can we get to San Francisco?" The particular conditions affecting the party make necessary specific questions as to time of leaving, time of arriving, comfort, expense. In short, definite information on the specific travel problem of the

group is needed. Some ways of getting to San Francisco are never considered because they do not meet the requirements and limitations imposed. The choice becomes narrowed to the real options which come within the possibilities of the particular group.

In the discussion of what route and train, members of the group are not interested in all the facts that might be brought out concerning each option but in the *real* advantages and disadvantages of each to them. These advantages and disadvantages are based on a prediction, made out of the experience of travelers, as to what is likely to happen if the routes, trains, and accommodations under consideration are taken. In the discussion, the group members will seek to understand and feel why some persons would prefer one of the options, and why others would prefer another. The facts presented concerning the various routes will be examined and at times challenged. The function of the discussion is to discover the route, train, and accommodations which will meet most nearly the conditions under which this particular group must travel, and the travel desires and standards of the group members. It may be found in the discussion that one option offers the best mountain scenery but takes longer, is rougher, and does not have as good equipment; another offers speed and comfort but extra expense; that between two of the options there may be no choice on equipment and expense but one goes through the higher mountains.

In the discussion there may be differences of opinion as to the reliability of the facts. Is the equipment poorer? Is the dining-car service superb? Is the road rough? Here it is a case of verifying the data as nearly as possible and coming to a mutual understanding of what is meant by the information because even facts are relative to the experience and standard of the group. But the chief discussion will turn on what is desirable and this involves the relative weight to be given in the final decision to comfort, speed, scenery, expense, and other important factors. Part of the group may prefer to miss a

great deal of the scenery and pay excess fare in order to save a business day and to shorten the time on the train. Others may prefer to save expense by taking a slower train, particularly if it is comfortable. Others may wish a still longer route because it goes through a part of the country they have not seen. The discussion then involves a consideration of differences of emphasis as to what is desirable for this trip in the way of travel standards. The choice is not between this route or that, but between comfort, speed, expense, and scenery. No decision, whether individual or group, is a simple one. There is probably no route, train, or accommodation which meets every desire. The discussion always involves a weighing of values and the choice is made because it meets those factors considered most essential and conserves the largest number of travel values. A certain amount of speed may be sacrificed for the sake of cost or scenery or comfort, depending upon which are considered most essential. In the process of give and take, as persons find that others differ as to standards of travel, they reexamine their own travel creed or code and may modify it temporarily for the particular trip, or even permanently.

The search is then for the route, train, and accommodations which under all the circumstances most nearly meet the particular needs and desires of this group. Whether there comes an integration of the desires of all and whether the group can really stay together in whole-hearted fashion depend partly on how far apart they are in particular desires and in their travel standards but more on how important they feel it is to go to San Francisco together. If they really wish to go together and if they are adaptable persons, they will work away, modifying and adjusting, until they find the option which sacrifices the fewest of the travel values and which builds into the trip the most of the desires of all. This will represent some modification but if time is taken a real integration is possible. It is a common goal and mutual respect for the desires of all which make integration take place.

The decision is a specific one. It is a certain route, train,

type of accommodation. But there are reasons for this choice, and those reasons represent the travel standards and conditions upon which the members of the group have agreed for this trip.

There is still left the necessity of attention to ways and means. Just to decide what route to take does not place the party on the train. Steps must be taken to put the decision into operation most expeditiously. Tickets must be bought, reservations made, money arranged for, appointments adjusted. The party must actually get aboard the train. Frequently attention is not given to ways and means and a good decision is rendered ineffective.

Other Examples of Group Thinking

Let us take a second illustration. A family is planning a vacation together. Here is a real situation where what to do is not clear but a decision is necessary and the decision involves the entire group. If the parents decide with their interests only in view, the children may not enjoy the vacation. On the other hand, if it is decided entirely with the interests of the children in mind, it may spoil the vacation for the adults. It is difficult for one person to take into account the interests of all. If the entire family is to enjoy the vacation the needs and the desires of all members must be met.

The immediate question is "What shall we do on this vacation?" But here again this question cannot be settled except with a consideration of the important factors in the situation. There will be first the necessity for the family in its family council to get these factors out into the open and understood by all. This means that father's attachment to golf, mother's desire for a social time, the boys' wishes for fishing, hiking, and swimming, and the girls' interest in tennis, social good times, and hikes shall all be given due consideration. Any special limitations which the situation of the family imposes must be understood—such limitations as finances, age of various members of the family, and health conditions. Special

duties which certain types of vacation might entail on the mother of the family must be remembered. Convenience in getting supplies and other items will need to be weighed. The desire is to meet the interests and problems of all and make it a vacation in which the entire family can join whole-heartedly. A reliable decision cannot be made until these important factors have been considered. It becomes then a much more specific and definite question. It is: What vacation will best meet the varying interests and needs of this particular family this particular summer?

The next step is to look for the possibilities. Again experience is appealed to: the former experience of the family and how it worked out as well as the experience of friends. The announcements of various places may be examined, verified, compared, appraised. The expert and the library of vacation possibilities may be consulted. In short, the information will come from the printed and personalized record of past experience and the decision will be made on a prediction in the light of experience as to what is likely to be true if this place or that is chosen. Certain places are ruled out by the statement that they are too expensive or that there is no golf or there is no fishing or that the climate will not satisfy. Finally, by this preliminary investigation of the possibilities, the choice is narrowed to some real options. In this preliminary investigation, there has been some consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of each place, but in this final decision, it is necessary to consider faithfully and earnestly the real reasons why each place would be desirable and the real reasons against each.

Out of this discussion of the real options, differences will emerge as to what is true of the various places suggested. More evidence may need to be secured before the doubting members of the family are convinced as to what are the facts concerning these various places. Discovering what are the facts demands investigation. Discussion here is valuable only in understanding and testing the facts. But the real differ-

ences in the discussion will probably emerge around the relative weight given in the thinking of various members of the family to this or that item in a vacation. It really turns on a weighing of values as to what is desirable, as to what constitutes a good vacation. This is a question of opinion and involves consideration of values. The choice in the last analysis will not be made between this place or that but rather as between these items and others which are considered essential to a good vacation. "I'd rather go there," says one member of the family, "even if it is difficult to reach and the accommodations are not quite so good, for there is fine mountain hiking and plenty of fishing." "But," says father, "there is a bum golf course, and what's a vacation without golf?" And so the discussion continues back and forth.

The underlying question of what constitutes a good vacation will be discussed all of the time in terms of specific places and items. The decision will never represent a perfect attainment of the vacation standards of the entire family; but will be an attempt to find the place in which can be found the most of the items which the various members of the family consider essential. If there is one member of the family whose desires have been ignored, he is likely to be hard to satisfy with any decision which is made. The decision will never be an easy and simple one. A certain place will be chosen because, in weighing value against value, it meets more of those values which are considered worth while than any other available option. While the purpose is to find a specific place, much discussion will emerge as to what makes an ideal vacation and in the process there will probably be modification of conviction in regard to the standards of a vacation. The result of the discussion is a specific decision as to a place with a "because," and the "because" represents the family's conclusion as to what upon the whole will make the best vacation for that summer.

There are still left the plans to carry the decision into effect. Reservations must be made, time decided upon, tickets bought,

vacation time arranged. If the members of the family are wise, they will appraise their decision after their return and they will make mental or written notes as to any revisions they wish to make, in the light of their summer's experience, as to what they consider an ideal vacation.

Perhaps it will make still clearer what is involved in a discussion process if three or four examples on one issue, namely, the race question, are outlined. For instance, take a situation where two Jewish girls asked for admission to a Sunday-school class. This became the issue for an entire session of the class. Some of the group were in favor of admitting the girls and others were opposed. They commenced giving their reasons. They found that they disagreed as to fact, as to whether Jewish girls were undesirable and hard to get along with, or whether that was just true of some Jewish girls the same as it was of some Gentiles. They also disagreed as to what attitude should be taken toward people of other races, particularly Jews. They had a very earnest discussion of attitude. Thus out of this specific situation two underlying important issues became the center of discussion. The group, after working back and forth, came to rather a united conclusion on the matter, some modification and integration of opinion having taken place. They decided to invite the girls to join the group. An interesting sidelight is the fact that the two Jewish girls who had asked for admission were visitors that morning without the girls knowing that these visitors were the Jewish girls who had applied. They heard the entire discussion and came out greatly thrilled about it because they heard just what other people thought about them and because of the fairness of the discussion.

Some know from the published account just what happened when the issue in regard to joining the Klan came before a Sunday-school class in a white church on the edge of a large and growing Negro section. Instead of attempting to settle the matter himself, the leader cooperated with the class in a complete investigation of the Klan issue and a full dis-

cussion of the race question. The class invited in representatives of the Klan; an anthropologist was brought in to the class to discuss whether the claim that there was real racial inferiority was founded on fact; racial attitudes in relation to the whole situation were discussed. Questions of fact were very much in evidence. One Sunday morning a member came with a volume of the Britannica to verify racial facts. What would be the Christian attitude, required extended exploration and discussion. They finally came to a specific conclusion after extended discussion, but their reasons represented changes in the group on racial facts and attitudes.

The discussion process can further be illustrated by the discussion of the race question at two conventions. At the Student Volunteer Convention in Indianapolis the race question was discussed in some thirty-five of the fifty groups. Three factors made this a specific and immediate issue with the student delegates. One factor was without doubt the representation of the race question in the opening addresses where a Negro and a Chinese stated rather frankly how they personally had felt when they were discriminated against by white people. There were in the convention representatives of various races, and many white students both from the North and the South found themselves meeting in small groups, on a supposed basis of equality, for the first time with Negro students. More than this, the race question was a rather pressing one in a number of the colleges from which the delegates came. Consequently, it became one of the main issues discussed.

The focus of the discussion was around immediate situations where decision had to be made concerning racial discrimination, such as eating places, social affairs, athletic teams, fraternities, transportation. The possible attitudes came out into the open quite frankly: some favored entire racial discrimination, others discrimination on social relations but not on business and educational opportunities; some wished equal opportunity, but separate from whites; some favored no discrimination; and in certain cases no discriminations except

those mutually agreed upon. There was the utmost frankness in discussing these attitudes, persons of each race stating how they felt about the question. For instance, some of the whites indicated that the Negroes were quite inferior and that, therefore, there was no chance of working it out except on a basis of racial discrimination. Members of the Negro race objected to this as a statement of fact and therefore the first underlying issue became one of fact. After the first discussion students were searching to discover what was true regarding racial differences. But the biggest clash was on what is the right attitude toward other races, just how much discrimination there could be if you really believed in respect for the personality of others, and the conclusions were decisions as to what they as individuals would do in certain specific cases that they were facing together with the reasons for each decision. The reasons indicated the facts which seemed to them reliable and the racial attitudes in which they had come to believe.

A group of students on the Pacific coast, in relation particularly to the Japanese question, went perhaps even a step further. A special commission had been appointed to gather data, particularly with reference to the student situation. Data secured by this larger investigation, therefore, were available. The first proposal was to have this commission present the racial problem as its investigation of the situation revealed it to be and come with certain proposals to the convention, these to be discussed, adopted, or rejected. This would necessitate summarizing in an hour the results of weeks of investigation. It was evident that on this plan, the racial problem, as it appeared to this commission, would be the focus of the discussion and that the racial issues, as students were facing them, might be ignored. Since it would manifestly be impossible to cover the entire situation, and some selection was necessary, it was finally decided to make racial situations faced by students the focus. Consequently, the discussion was opened by giving the students opportunity to indicate situations they were actually facing on the coast in which racial relation-

ships were involved. A number of very specific situations, particularly in relation to the Japanese, were presented and the main issues were determined. Reasons for these racial prejudices were stated and discussed. Then the chairman of the commission was asked to place these immediate questions in the larger setting of the entire race problem on the coast, selecting from his material such data as would indicate the factors which needed to be considered in understanding the situations and the relations of these immediate student questions to the total race problem.

The next section of the discussion was given to proposals for solution of the question. The students expressed what were to them genuine possibilities for actual practice and attitude in relation to the Japanese and other Orientals. Under each proposal, the real reasons why persons felt this would be the best solution of the race issues were discussed. Again it was found that there were differences of opinion as to questions of fact, as to the ability of the Japanese, their reliability, their attitude toward citizenship, and similar questions. The chairman of the commission made available such data as he had from his investigation on these questions of fact. But the main issue joined on the question of what is really desirable in the relations between the races. Here the integrating factor was consideration of what would be best for both whites and Orientals and for the welfare of the coast. This gave an inclusive motive for the discussion and brought into it a certain spirit in which something beyond private interests became the integrating factor in the discussion. Instead of leaving the conclusions entirely for each individual to carry out for himself, attention was given to the ways and means by which students might help in the situation on the coast.

It should be evident from these illustrations what is involved in the group process essential to a democratic participation in the decisions and attitudes of life on the part of persons concerned in these situations. The following is a brief outline of this procedure:

An Outline of Group Thinking Procedure

I. THE SITUATION AND ITS PROBLEM:

1. What is the specific question to be decided?
2. What factors in the situation are important and must be taken into consideration in the decision? Why?

II. WHAT TO DO?

1. *Examination of possibilities:*

- a. To meet the situation and problem as outlined, what are the possible courses of action and the reason for each?
- b. What bonds seem to unite the group and on what is there agreement as to fact and opinion?
- c. What are the chief differences:
 - (1.) On matters of fact (as to what is true)?
 - (2.) On matters of opinion or point of view (as to what is desirable)?

2. *Exploration of differences of fact and discussion of differences of point of view:*

- a. What are the data on differences as to facts?
- b. What can be said on differences as to point of view?

3. *Reaching a conclusion:*

What decision can be reached which will meet the situation with its relevant factors and what facts and opinions are the reasons for this decision?

III. How to Do It (ways and means)?

1. *What are the ways and means for putting the decision into effect?*

Group Thinking Procedure Distinguished from Herbart's Five Steps

Considerable confusion sometimes occurs because this procedure is not distinguished from the Herbartian plan of teaching with its five steps. This has formed the basis for most groups or classes, where there was participation, during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. But while the outlines of the two proce-

dures have seeming similarities, there are fundamental differences.

Herbart said that in teaching there should be five steps as follows:¹

1. Preparation.
2. Presentation.
3. Comparison.
4. Generalization.
5. Application.

The procedure suggested in this book for group thinking is developed from Dewey's analysis of a complete act of thought, though this analysis has been modified and enlarged. He says in "How We Think,"² that thinking involves:

1. A felt difficulty.
2. Its location and definition.
3. Suggestion of possible solutions.
4. Development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestions.
5. Further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection.

The differences between the Herbartian five steps and the procedure as outlined in this book are very marked. There is a decided difference in the purpose. In the Herbartian outline the purpose is stated in terms of a conclusion reached, a goal predetermined, an outcome decided upon. For example, it is to lead persons to agree to Prohibition, or to convince the group that the League of Nations is a good thing; or to get a boy to quit swearing. This has been evidenced in almost any instructions to teachers in Sunday-school lesson helps. The aim of the lesson has been stated in definite terms of what the lesson writer intends the pupil to adopt. Miss Laura Boyer

¹ If this is unfamiliar, see discussion of it for general education in McMURRY'S "Elements of General Method"; for religious education in WEIGLE'S "The Pupil and the Teacher," Chap. XIV.

² DEWEY, JOHN, "How We Think," p. 72.

in her book, "Method of Group Discussion," a book following largely the Herbartian procedure, states it very explicitly:

The next step in the preparation of a lesson outline is to form questions on these points so that the group may be led smoothly and without a break in the thought from one step to the other until the conviction is secured. That the points thus outlined as forming a line of argument may also be used as the basis for an address or lecture will be evident. However, in the discussion method these points are developed by the use of questions, the answers to which *lead to the conclusions suggested in the aim.*¹

In the procedure for group thinking, on the other hand, the purpose is stated in terms of a search or a quest. There is a situation, and the aim is to find what to do in the situation. No one is sure of the outcome. The aim is very definite but it is in terms of a process to be followed rather than a predetermined outcome to be adopted.

There is also a decided difference in the "presentation." In the Herbartian outline the presentation has usually been in terms of knowledge and information apart from a life situation. The subject matter in an Herbartian procedure is not a record of experience, but knowledge or truth, presented in general terms unrelated to any particular experience. For instance, if there were a discussion of honesty, the presentation would be facts regarding honesty and points of emphasis which should be adopted leading to such a conclusion as "honesty is the best policy."

In contrast, in the procedure here outlined for group thinking the "presentation" is of possible solutions of this particular question, courses of action in this situation. The knowledge used is information concerning efforts to meet similar situations and the light which these experiences would throw on the present problem. On a question of honesty, actual places where the issue was being faced would be considered, and the discussion would be of ways of acting which were considered honest or dishonest. Honesty would thus be considered in

¹ BOYER, LAURA, "The Method of the Discussion Group," Chap. IV.

terms of its meaning in life. The conclusion would be not an abstract generalization, but a specific decision with the reasons for the same. Even the "generalization" itself would be in terms of life.

Another contrast is in the presentation of other points of view. When the conclusion is predetermined, contrary evidence is admitted only as it would by comparison lead to an adoption of the truth being presented. Miss Boyer states this quite clearly:

Questions should not be asked negatively, as for instance, "Why should Mohammedanism not remain the religion of Africa?" This question should rather be asked positively, as, "What elements in the Christian religion make it valuable for Africa?" The danger involved in negative questions is obvious. In answering this question in its negative form, for instance, one's thoughts are focused on the good qualities of Mohammedanism. It is quite possible that a member of a class not quite firmly convinced will arrive at the conclusion that Mohammedanism is quite good enough for Africa. In answering the question in its positive form, one's thoughts are focused on the value of Christianity.

It is evident that there is no thought of a fair examination of Mohammedanism in comparison with Christianity. Mohammedanism is condemned in advance, Christianity adopted. The questions even are phrased so as to bias this conclusion from the first. On the contrary, in the procedure as here outlined, all courses of action or suggested answers to the issue which are held as live options are brought into the discussion. The effort is made to understand these points of view and why people hold them and to reach a conclusion after a fair and genuine examination of all of the possible solutions. The attempt is made to look at these various suggestions as they seem to those who believe in them, not as they seem to those who doubt them.

A fourth contrast comes in the "application." In a true Herbartian outline, a person is dealing with subject matter and general truth stated more or less abstractly until the fifth step,

the application, is reached. There the application of this truth to life is introduced. The assumption is that information is first learned and then applied; that truth is something arrived at in the abstract and then worked out in life. Consequently, the first four steps are given to presenting the new information or the new truth in relation to what is already known and then the fifth step asks what the application of this truth to life would involve. In the procedure as here outlined, however, the application is the center of the discussion from the first. Subject matter is considered data on this life situation and is presented only in terms of life and as it will give help on finding what to do. From one point of view the entire outline is application.

There is an assumption in the Herbartian outline of a dualism—that subject matter is something which exists apart from its meaning in life and apart from the persons who are to use it. It is the purpose of the educative process to get this subject matter learned by the individual so he can apply it to life. The preparation or point of contact is considered the connecting link. In short, the new truth is to be presented in terms of that which was already known. While recognizing that the new is understood in terms of the old, the life-situation approach would insist that both the new and the old must be in terms of life experience. This dualism between subject matter and life experience seems false because subject matter is only recorded experience.

The situation is still further confused in actual practice because many persons now handling discussions were trained first in the formal Herbartian method and have little by little changed their practice so that their procedure is a mixture of the two. The first modification most persons have made is to state the point of contact in life-situation terms. A truly Herbartian approach would necessitate that the preparation be made in terms of knowledge or subject matter already possessed by the group involved. What do they know about Sunday laws or race relations or sex hygiene? In this modified

procedure, the leader, instead of using a point of contact on the basis of the information his group has about Sunday laws, would open the discussion with a consideration of a Sunday situation. If there were a race discussion, instead of the preparation consisting of information about racial differences and characteristics which the members of the group might have, it would involve a racial situation which the members of the group were facing. This modification was made by many persons in order to increase the interest of the group. They found that a formal point of contact lacked vitality but that when they used the life situations of the group, interest was captured at once.

At first this point of contact was used simply to capture interest. There was no return again to the life situation as it was introduced at the beginning to see what to do about it. It was used simply as a way to introduce the subject matter. But a second modification was soon made, namely, to return in the application to the situation which was set in the point of contact. The outline then became as follows: (1) a life situation point of contact; (2) presentation of information and truth useful in the situation; (3) comparison of this information and of this truth with that held by others; (4) generalization representing in abstract form the truth to be applied in the situation; (5) application of the truth arrived at to the life situation outlined under (1). The material in steps (2), (3), and (4) was still in general abstract form, even though a life situation had been introduced in the point of contact and application.

The third modification was to state the information or the truth in terms of ways of acting or attitudes to be taken in life. It would not be general Sunday information but what might actually be done and why, in this particular Sunday situation. It was no longer general conclusions about race, but specific racial attitudes or ways of acting in relation to other races. Still only one point of view was presented and the evidence all led to the conclusion which the leader wished. Thus, for in-

stance, on the Sunday outline the presentation might give reasons and evidence why it is harmful to have movies or play baseball or engage in other recreation on Sunday, and lead to the conclusion that Sunday could meet the needs of persons without unduly liberalizing the practice.

Many persons are still in confusion and are handling their groups on a mixture of Herbartian and self-situation approaches without recognizing the confusion. If group thinking is to be successful it must be more than a modification of Herbart's formal steps of teaching. It must represent genuine thinking on the part of the group.

CHAPTER IV

SUGGESTIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF GROUP THINKING

The purpose of this chapter is to give suggestions as to how a group, small or large, may be helped in carrying through the group-thinking process. We are assuming that the group is facing a common situation or that there is before it an issue of interest to all. We shall discuss later how to arouse interest and how to secure among persons who are antagonistic or who have strong prejudices cooperation in discussion.

I. GETTING THE SITUATION, ITS CENTRAL PROBLEM AND RELEVANT FACTORS INTO THE OPEN

In whatever form the problem faces the group, it is important first to recognize that it is not sufficient just to state the problem. Time must be taken for a description of the situation as it appears to various members of the group. It is not enough to open the discussion by a mere statement of the question: such as, What should be the relationship between boys and girls? or, What part should America take in international affairs? or, What degree of discrimination should there be between the races? or, What answer should we make to the appeal to back labor legislation? Even when the question is drawn sharply and is very specific, to go at once to discussion without time for understanding the issue in the setting it has for this particular group makes for needless argument and misunderstanding.

A question for discussion always represents a problem in a setting. There are differences in the actual setting and in the importance given to the various factors by one group as compared to another. This is why that which is seemingly the same question is never the same for two groups in different situa-

tions or indeed for the same group at different times. Even a seemingly simple decision—such as a decision as to which road to take when coming to a fork in the road in automobilizing—cannot be made except as the important elements in the situation for that particular automobile party on that particular day are taken into account. These include personal considerations such as health or feelings; situations individual members in the party may be facing, such as appointments; and common environmental conditions, such as weather and the condition of the car. On two different days a party of the same persons would not have exactly the same problem at the same fork of the road. A problem must always be considered as it manifests itself to the particular group facing it.

In this connection, the emphasis of the Gestalt psychology is valuable. That to which the individual responds, the Gestalt psychologist would emphasize, is seldom a simple stimulus. It is to something in the focus of attention, seen against its background. Therefore the response is to a complex situation composed of the focal stimulus in the perspective of its particular setting. It is the problem placed in its setting and the two taken together which are essential to a discussion. If there were a different problem defined in the foreground in the same setting the reaction would be different, but the same problem defined with a different background would cause a still different reaction. This is the reason why, when the question represents a baffling or confused situation, it is necessary to explore the situation, define the problem, and bring out into the open and arrange in relationship the important factors. This is the reason why, when the question is very specific or a definite proposal is made, it is necessary to put it in its setting before it can be discussed fruitfully.

There is another reason for taking time to describe the situation fully. If a group is to discuss a question in a rewarding manner, each person must not only be aware of the problem as it appears and feels to him but must also understand and feel it as it looks to the others in the group. The chairman does not

know what the issue means to the members of the group, nor does any member of the group know what it means to the others, until there has been enough time for discussion so that there is this mutual understanding of the important factors in the situation and the problems involved. More than this, a description of the important factors means that various persons emphasize different factors until the situation and its problems come to take on meaning which they otherwise would not have. Unless time is taken really to develop the problem, important elements in the situation will be overlooked. Even in the same automobile one person will think of one thing and another of another, and an intelligent decision means a moment's delay at the fork in the road if there is anything at stake in the decision itself. Further, no problem has fully the glow of life and reality until the group has taken time to describe the situation and come to feel the problem anew. The process is more than one of "warming up" the group, though it does have this effect.

These important factors in the situation become the tests to be applied to any solution to determine the degree to which it will seem to the group an answer to their problem. The search for the solution becomes the effort to meet the demands brought by these factors. If on the trip to San Francisco, health, the love of mountain scenery, necessity for speed because of engagements, desire to stop at certain cities to see relatives, and fussiness about comfort are each important factors to certain members of the group, and all find it necessary to travel economically, then each proposal will be tested as to the number of these factors it meets. If, in a racial situation, there is strong racial prejudice on the part of some, chafing under discrimination on the part of others, and a state of race friction that is dangerous, these three important factors would be determining ones in the choice of a solution. It will be noted that some of these factors are found in the likes and dislikes, the attitudes, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies of the members of the group; some are found in individual situations different members of the group may be facing; and others

represent factors in the common situation met by the group as a whole in relation to this problem. When any factors become especially important, they must be given particular attention. If the chairman will be alert he will be able to note in this opening part of the discussion where the difficulties in reaching a conclusion will probably be. These factors represent desires, purposes, important considerations which individuals wish conserved in any conclusion. Disagreement on these factors, and particularly considerations which seem irreconcilable, reveal in the opening analysis of the problem some of the points of probable conflict in reaching a conclusion.

This description and analysis of the situation and development of the problem becomes all the more important when the members of the group, facing the same general type of problem in a variety of situations and with differing background experiences, are attempting to get help on their individual manifestations of the problem by thinking it through together. For instance, what should be done in labor difficulties, what degree of racial discrimination is desirable, what are proper relations between men and women, may bring together persons from a variety of situations. The best way to accomplish mutual understanding is to secure from the group members themselves descriptions of various known situations where the problem is immediate and the real issues are clear. [

In opening a discussion, it is advisable to have all descriptions take place in the third person, and without personal commitment on the part of the persons giving them. The description is that of a discriminating and alert observer. The reason for this method is twofold. First, greater frankness is secured. A person will speak with less reservation about a situation or a problem he is describing thus objectively and he will at the same time indicate what is really pertinent to him. This is particularly true of rather personal questions or of those on which there is strong prejudice. A second reason is even more important. An open-minded discussion involves that the persons party to it should not become committed to a point of

view at the opening of the discussion. Modification of opinion will not take place easily if persons have committed themselves and have, in self-respect, to defend their commitments. Avoid "I think" or "I propose" or "I believe." Persons should not take sides early in the discussion.

In every case the person making the contribution should indicate why: why he considers the factors he mentions important; why he thinks this a question of concern; why he believes the issue he states is the important issue; or why he believes these are the reasons for the difficulty. This gives opportunity for the differences in viewpoint to emerge and the issues to be defined. It also prevents argument and places the discussion on a plane of giving evidence.

A time comes in the discussion when no new contributions are being made: persons are simply saying over again what has already been contributed or giving additional instances of what has already been suggested. It is then time for the chairman and the group to work together in making a summary of the important factors in the situation and the issues which have emerged. With these important factors recognized, the question can be restated so that attention is focused on the problem and so that the important considerations in the situation will be kept in mind as the search for what to do is carried on. The first stopping place in the discussion represents the summary of the question as the preliminary exploration has revealed it. This summary must not be so detailed that it is practically a repetition of the discussion. On the other hand it must not be oversimplified. The discussion following will be pertinent in proportion as it deals with the specific perplexities or difficulties of the group and in proportion as the factors in the situation which are considered important to the various members of the group are really recognized. It is important that this summary recognize any factors in the situation or ends to be attained on which there seems to be agreement and that the summary include contrasting or opposing considerations. Thus, the summary of the

analysis of the situation becomes the first step in the recognition of the bonds which unite the group and toward the focusing of attention upon the real differences.

II. WHAT TO DO ON THE ISSUE AS DEFINED SO AS TO MEET THE FACTORS SHOWN TO BE IMPORTANT

- I. *Determination of Possible Courses of Action or Ways Out and Consideration of the Reasons for Each Proposal.*

The second stage in discussion is the examination of the possible courses of action which seem to be real options to the group. The chairman must be sure to state the question of search for solution in relation to the summary of the first stage of the discussion so that it will be evident that it is not a general search for an answer to a general problem but a specific search for what to do in the situation under consideration. The point here is to be sure that every option or proposal which seems important to members of the group is recognized and considered, even though it may not seem important to the leader. It is important also to be sure that any proposals of which a group is ignorant but which might appeal, are brought before it in some way. The proposed courses of actions must include not only those which are live options because of the experience of the group, but others which have grown out of the richer experience of other groups in the past or present. In short, the group seeks to meet its particular situation in the light of the best experience to date in meeting similar situations. Any person making a proposal makes it because on the basis of experience it seems to him likely to work out effectively in this situation.

The reason for being sure that all the possible alternatives which experience to date has revealed, are before the group is fourfold. First, if the group is to have the advantage of the best experience to date, care must be taken to see that that experience is included. Second, minorities in the group will not

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engage wholeheartedly in the discussion if options which seem important to them are ignored. Third, if the group is to reach a conclusion which is in any way an integration, it will probably represent a combination of proposals or some new proposal which gathers up all the interests of the group. Such an integration is more likely to happen if all of the proposals are really considered. In the fourth place, creative groups which find ways out which are for the members of these groups new born, become creative because of the richness and versatility of the proposals before them. Originality and creativity in a group grow out of richness rather than out of paucity of experience and suggestion.

Frequently, possible ways out have been partially or fully determined in Section I, the analysis of the situation. In this analysis the issue may have narrowed itself to one or more proposals or the question may have come in the form of a definite proposal. This may represent a specific proposition, such as, Should there be dancing in the Young Men's Christian Association building? or, Can a person believe in God? or, Should the United States join the League of Nations. Frequently, however, the solution requires the consideration of several possibilities. For instance, on the question of war: some suggest complete preparedness; others a complete pacifist attitude; others a position somewhere between the two. Whatever proposals have already emerged should be summarized at the beginning of the discussion of what to do. But even in such an event it will still be wise to see whether there are any other proposals, and time should be taken to be sure that all the real options are before the group. Even though the issue may have emerged as the League of Nations, it may be discussed more successfully if an alternative proposal of entering the World Court, which for many is a live option, is considered in relation to it. Any feasible solution which might possibly suggest a way out should be examined. In this connection, the group must be sure not to make just a long list of alternatives. It is a case of selecting the ones which are important either to

the group or in the experience of other groups. Proposals should be grouped together which are simply different ways of stating the same alternative. This does not mean that a seemingly slight modification of a main proposal, which makes what is to members of the group an important variation, should be ruled out. The group should eliminate those which are not real options; make any combinations which seem wise; and narrow the discussion to the most likely possibilities.

The reasons for each proposal may be given at the time it is made; all the possibilities may be listed and all the reasons may be given later; or a combination of these two may be made, as the progress of the discussion makes most desirable. In the conduct of the discussion it will help if the leader lists the reasons for each proposal in columns as they are given, so that the reasons for one proposal may be compared with reasons for another. It is quite important in this part of the discussion that there should not be any attempt to oppose any particular course of action but that the group should seek to understand the reasons as each is advocated. This is not an attempt to list all the arguments that can be found, but to feel the conviction which makes individuals "bet upon" a proposal as the way to meet the situation. It will be seen, therefore, that these reasons are not intellectual arguments but considerations charged with the emotion of real life. It will frequently be found that some of the reasons for a course of action are a repetition of considerations which the preliminary analysis of the situation showed to be important.

The discussion of the proposals involves a prediction of the likely consequences and comparison of these consequences. Both the accuracy of the prediction and the desirability of the consequences must be considered. Care should be taken to see that the reasons for proposals are based on evidence out of experience or on predictions which have some foundation in reality. If the group members are making seemingly wild claims for a proposal, they can be brought to reality by asking: Why do people believe it will work out this

way? What evidence is there in experience that this proposal would bring the results suggested?

The discussion should be carried on in the third person so that there is an objective examination of possibilities rather than a defense of the individual platform of members of the group. When a proposal is made, therefore, the question should be asked: Why do some persons think this is the best way to meet the situation? This will enable individuals to advocate a possibility with all the glow of reality without at the same time committing themselves to it in such a way as to embarrass modification of conviction. Care must be taken that if a possibility is advocated with conviction by a minority in the group, it shall be given just as full and careful consideration as possibilities advocated by a majority.

Sometimes it is desirable to find the reasons for and against each proposal. This usually takes too much time, however, and is in danger of starting argument. The reasons for one proposal are usually the reasons against its opposite. Consequently, to consider the various proposals with the reasons why each is advocated is, in general, a better way to develop differences. It places the entire discussion on a positive rather than a negative basis. In this part of the discussion every effort should be made to get all of the group participating in the reasons for each possibility suggested. One of the best ways to remove prejudice, release emotion, and secure open mindedness is to get persons to look at the real reasons why a view to which they may be in opposition is held by other persons. If they will commence stating the good points in another proposal they have taken the first step toward admitting some validity in a position contrary to their own and toward integrating the contribution of all in a common conclusion.

2. *Recognition of the Underlying Agreements and Exploration of the Disagreements.*

As the reasons each possibility is proposed are given, the bonds which unite the group and the underlying differences

will become more evident. In part, this will be simply sharpening agreements and differences which emerged in the descriptive analysis with its picture of the situation and its central problem. But other agreements and differences will emerge, for which the chairman must be on the lookout. If the various proposals and the reasons for each have been listed in columns, a useful device is to mark the agreements in relation to the various proposals plus +, and to mark the disagreements minus —, connecting up agreements and disagreements so they will easily be evident to the eye.

The most important element is to discover the purposes, the points of emphasis, the goals to be attained, or the things considered worth while on which the members of the group are united. These common desires or values represent the bonds which hold the group together and make it willing to search cooperatively for an answer to the question. If it is found in the discussion that some advocate one proposal and others advocate an alternative proposal because each makes for progress; that one group advocates a proposal, and another advocates an alternative proposal because each makes for better race relations; there is in these common reasons which are given for different proposals a common interest or purpose or loyalty which unites the two.

These bonds are of different kinds. Sometimes loyalty to an organization or group and its welfare is the common bond. Sometimes it is a cause or goal of endeavor, such as racial relationships, elimination of war, better understanding between old and young, or finer sex attitudes. Sometimes it is a common concern in which all are involved and on which they wish to find a way out, such as parents in homes or teachers in schools. Whatever the bond or bonds, they should be recognized in the summary.

Next in importance is to recognize the agreements as to fact and opinion. This aids in reaching a conclusion by recognizing agreements already reached and focuses the discussion on the real differences. This is especially important in preventing

an unnecessary waste of time. For instance, on the League of Nations issue, the chairman may find that all agree that America must participate in European affairs in some way, but disagree as to the exact form of participation which is most desirable. As soon as this is evident, the chairman will summarize so that the discussion focuses, not on whether we should participate in European affairs but on what form that participation should take. If, on the other hand, he finds that the group is divided on European participation in any form, one part feeling that America is responsible to Europe and must be willing to consider her relationship to European affairs and the other part feeling that European affairs are none of America's concern, then there is nothing to be gained by discussing the particular form which participation should take. The discussion will turn on the extent to which America should look out for herself and the extent to which she is obligated to Europe. He may find one proposal defended because it will protect legitimate American interests, and at the same time allow America to participate in European affairs, and quite another proposal defended on the same grounds. He then recognizes that he has a common concern in which all agree: safeguard legitimate American interests and at the same time secure effective participation in Europe. The chairman then phrases his question: What form of participation will best safeguard legitimate American interests and at the same time allow America to participate most effectively in European affairs? This means that the discussion then will turn upon what proposal will best meet this double consideration on which all agree. The discussion has possibility of integration because it is turning on values recognized by all sides in the discussion.

If in a racial discussion it is evident that all agree as to the probable amount of racial difference, the question becomes: Granted that there is such and such difference between the races, what degree of discrimination is desirable? If there is already agreement that the differences are such as not to war-

rant sharp discrimination, the discussion may become even further narrowed and focused.

The disagreements should be sorted out, stated in question form, and taken up one by one. The consideration of these represents the crucial part of the discussion. The issue emerges in a specific situation but the differences come in these underlying convictions and points of view. These differences of fact and of opinion represent the real clash of the discussion. Individuals do not decide between one railroad route and another, but between the relative place to be given to speed, comfort, scenery, etc. The clash in race is not on admission to Pullmans and eating places, on joint participation in business or education; but actually turns on the extent of racial differences and attitudes toward segregation and amalgamation.

In this process, differences should be brought clearly out into the open. No genuine integration can take place by glossing over differences when people are in direct opposition. The differences will be found to be of two sorts. Some of these are differences of fact. In a discussion of race relations there will be disagreement as to what the intelligence tests show as to the relative capability of races. In a discussion of the relations between men and women, there will be definite disagreement as to the harmfulness of certain sex practices. These differences of fact should not be debated but explored to discover what are the facts. They require investigation, appraisal of authorities, verification of evidence. This may come through research by the group members or by calling on experts. Sometimes a group will need to join with other groups in actual experimentation. It will frequently be discovered that there is conflicting evidence or that the experts disagree. The only thing a group can do is to examine the evidence and come to the best possible conclusions as to what are the facts. If the experts who disagree can be brought into the group so that their evidence may be presented and compared, it will help. Miss Follett rightly emphasizes "collective

fact finding"¹ because facts themselves are elusive. A group cannot carry on collective fact finding, but it can give sufficient time to the discussion of evidence so that it is understood by all and there is mutual agreement as to what the facts are and what they mean. It must be remembered that if there should be a final and complete divergence on the facts, it is impossible to secure a united decision on any basis until further investigation or experimentation establishes the facts. The group process here will involve a period for research.

But more often, the discussion turns upon a difference as to what is desirable. The more crucial disagreements usually represent differences of emphasis or disagreements as to what is worth while. It does not settle the race questions to agree as to racial differences. It does not answer the question of democracy to agree as to what the intelligence tests show about the capacity of people. The real issue still remains. Granted that racial differences are as they seem to be, what degree of discrimination is desirable? Granted that the intelligence tests reveal the capacity of people which they seem to show, what type of democratic participation by the rank and file of persons is desirable? This part of the discussion turns upon an individual's scale of values. If respect for personality and mutual good will between races seem to him most important, he will make one answer. If the development of his own race and the maintenance of racial purity seem to him most important, he will make another. If getting a thing done and securing the most expert conclusions seem to him most important, he will decide in one way in regard to democracy; if developing people and giving them a chance for self-expression seem to him a vital consideration, he will make another decision. Differences of point of view require discussion, in which the reasons for each are considered and compared. There is weighing of values and careful consideration of points of emphasis.

It is interesting to notice that no sharp division can be made

¹See FOLLETT, MARY P., "Creative Experience," Chap. I.

between questions of fact and questions of opinion and that the differences come both as to fact and opinion and the interrelation of the two. For instance, on the race question, the underlying disagreement as to the extent of racial differences involves immediately an interpretation. Do the facts as to racial differences make it inevitable that these discriminations along racial lines shall continue or do the facts warrant our treating members of other races on the same basis as our own. There is real difference among scientists on the facts but even greater differences on the interpretation of them.

A similar thing is true in regard to a discussion on the competitive *versus* the cooperative basis for life. It is partly a difference in fact, in that some claim that the competitive basis gives every person about what he deserves, while others claim that it is more than fair to some and less than fair to others. This necessitates an examination of the results of the competitive system: how income is distributed; whether great concentration of wealth is the reward of exceptional service to society; whether the so-called underpaid persons are dear at the price and the so-called overpaid persons economical even at their supposedly excessive cost; whether, aside from a small proportion of cases due to sickness and misfortune, anyone who is thrifty can have enough on which to live; and whether the present competitive system is weighted in favor of the few at the expense of the many. In all of these, verification of facts and interpretation of them are joined.

Discussions of petting and dancing turn on whether these are harmful in their effect upon personality and upon the relations of men and women, but even more upon what is desirable in the way of sex expression and the function of sex in life.

When, in the preliminary exploration of the situation, it is evident that there are particularly serious difficulties or prejudices to be overcome, or that there are interests felt by one part of the group seemingly in conflict with interests of another part of the group, it is desirable to sort these out and use them one by one in the discussion. What course of action will meet

this fear? What course of action will conserve this which seems to some important? What course of action will conserve this other important emphasis? Where there are several values involved and for some in the group one is of major importance and for others another, it helps to consider each separately, and then to try to bring them together. For instance, in a discussion of Sunday tennis for industrial girls in connection with the Y W C A, for some the preservation of Sunday, for others the welfare of the industrial girls, for others the well-being of the Y W C A, was the prime consideration. It is better to discuss separately what course of action will best conserve Sunday, what course of action is best for the industrial girls, what will best conserve the progress of the Y W C A. Then these can be summarized in: What course of action will conserve what should be guarded in Sunday, safeguard the interests of the industrial girls, and not unduly compromise the usefulness of the Y W C A?

It is particularly disastrous to the progress of a discussion to carry on in the abstract the consideration of agreements or disagreements. To no two persons in the group will these principles, stated in the abstract, mean the same. Such abstract discussion causes heat when there is disagreement, but throws little light on the issue; and an agreement on general principles often causes confusion because it may prove to be in fact a disagreement. To argue in general whether brotherhood, race equality, respect for personality, democratic participation, industrial democracy are practical and desirable often means that no party to the discussion knows what the other person is talking about. All sorts of fear and defense reactions are aroused because of that which each person reads into the terms. One individual argues for race equality, and that at once seems to others to carry with it everything which they have feared, including intermarriage. It may be the person advocating race equality does not mean this. Another person advocates industrial democracy, and Russia and Bolshevism loom up. It may be one person means something entirely

different from the economic system advocated by Lenin. Another person questions the importance of some Christian doctrine cardinal in the mind of others. This carries much more than was intended. Since this doctrine seems to the persons holding it essential to the welfare and the salvation of people, to question it seems to show disregard for important values. But it often happens, on the other hand, that the members of a group say they agree in their belief in brotherhood, respect for personality, loyalty to the country, good will to other races, and at the same time it is discovered that they disagree radically as to what they would do in the concrete. This shows that when the principle is defined, they really disagree on the principle. The discussion turns on what is involved in brotherhood, respect for personality, good will to other races.

To discuss in general terms the validity and importance of certain principles or points of emphasis is to bring misunderstanding. Principles are standards or values to guide action. They grow out of experience and have meaning only in relation to experience. Constructive discussion takes place only as the specific situation is faced on the basis of the underlying differences of fact and conviction; and the underlying differences are discussed in terms of their meaning in the concrete situation. If the discussion is confined to the specific situations and the concrete proposals, it is likely to devolve into mere argument and there is no hope of arriving anywhere because there is no examination and comparison of the reasons for the different proposals. The discussion becomes trivial because it is carried on superficially. But if an attempt is made to discuss the underlying differences, without reference to the specific situations, the discussion becomes an abstract consideration of general terms such as race equality, brotherhood, etc. If attention is given to a specific situation, in which all are concerned, and an attempt is made to find what to do, and to understand each what the other advocates and why, the principles are defined so they are understood.

Principles keep growing. To each new situation a person brings the principles, the guides to conduct, which have grown up in his experience to date. But as he faces the new situation, if he does it on any basis of thought, he is involved in a reexamination of his principles; in short, he looks again at the reasons for his action. In the process his principles are influenced, either modified or strengthened. For an individual, the working guides of his life keep growing and changing.

3. *Reaching a Decision or a Conclusion*

All that has happened thus far in the discussion makes toward reaching a conclusion which will be considered best by all concerned and which will conserve the values and points of emphasis considered important. The conclusion includes always two parts: a decision as to a specific course of action which forms a definite answer to the problem; and the reasons that this has been chosen. It is "what" we shall do, plus a "why" we do it. The "why," the "because," represents the facts, the viewpoints, the goals or purposes on which the group is now united.

It must be recognized that in trying to secure a conclusion we are not looking in group discussion for a trading compromise. If the conclusion is to be really worth while it must have been reached after an exploration of the situation and after a consideration of the factors in the situation which seem to the group important. It must follow a discussion of all the possibilities which are real options and an examination of the genuine reasons for each. It must follow a careful investigation of the facts and be as satisfactory a conclusion as possible as to these facts. It must have given full and due consideration to values or points of view which seem to any persons in the group desirable. The effort in the conclusion is to find that which will not sacrifice any values which seem to members of the group worth while and which will conserve in the conclusion the best experience and contribution of all. Usually it is possible, if a group really wants to find a way out together

and if they have common purposes which bind them, to find a conclusion which is in this sense creative. Compromise means suppressing differences and holding them in abeyance for the sake of peace. There is a semblance of unity, but underneath the differences persist and are bound to break out again. Integration represents the result of the magnifying of differences, of seeking to bring out into the open every contribution, of attempt to build into the conclusion the very best of all.

In reaching a conclusion, the group should search for some new alternative rather than merely make a choice from the possibilities which they saw when they began the discussion. This may be a selection from several possibilities, combined in a single proposal. It may be a new alternative which no person had thought of before and which was created in the group process. For instance, during a baffling discussion, a man wrote out a new proposal which gathered up the conflicting desires in a way satisfying to all.

The question for the conclusion should commence with "what" and not with "which." "Which" involves a choice from alternatives already suggested; "what" opens the way for a combination or a new alternative. A conclusion is not necessarily an "either or"; it may be a "both and," or it may represent something new born which gathers up and conserves on a higher plane the contribution of all. It is not self plus society, but a developing self in a developing society. It is not America against the rest of the world, but America and the rest of the world. It is not more goods at the sacrifice of better people, but more goods and better people. If a group will take time enough, there is found an integration, creative in the sense that it gathers up the best contribution of all and conserves the values which are important.

How long the group will be willing to postpone decision in order to insure an integration and how earnestly it will search for a way out in which they all can join whole-heartedly depends on how strong are the bonds which unite it. The European Student Relief conference at Parad, Hungary, was

soon after the great war and the first time that representatives of the warring nations and of the minorities had met together. They felt this international fellowship around student aid might be an important factor in bringing the nations together. When it looked as if this representative group of students could not find a course of action which would meet interests and points of view of the contending nations, they said: What hope is there of reuniting Europe if we can find no way of fellowship? For the sake of Europe, we must find that in which we all can join. So they postponed decision for hours and worked earnestly in discussion until an alternative was discovered which really united them.

If the process has been a thoroughgoing one, then changes have taken place in the group members individually as progress toward a group decision has been made. The situation looks different; the factors important to individual members have been related to factors important to others; possibilities new to individuals in the group have been suggested; knowledge of facts bearing on the situation has been gained; new points of view have been examined and individual convictions have been modified. In short, the conclusion is not simply a physical addition of all the elements in the group. A chemical process has gone on. In the conclusion, all the original elements in the group are included. But they have been modified in the process; certain dross has been eliminated; and they are gathered up in a solution which is something new, different from any single suggestion, and yet including the best suggestions of all. Group thinking is like a chemical process, in which the elements are modified and combined but not lost.

III. How to Do It (Ways and Means)

In this section of the discussion, plans are made to put the conclusion as to what to do into practical effect. Too frequently discussion, whether of some organization in regard to its enterprises or some group in regard to a social issue, stops with the decision that a certain course of action would be de-

sirable, but makes no practical plans to carry out the conclusion. Resolutions favoring something are the bane of social and religious gatherings. Energy is frequently given to getting the resolutions phrased properly rather than to making plans for putting the resolution into effect. Often, the group passing a desirable resolution has the emotional glow which would be warranted only by the completion of the enterprise. Many a Sunday-school class has felt itself actually righteous because it has concluded in the consideration of the lesson that righteousness is a good thing. The number of resolutions that have been passed would have made over the world had even a small fraction of them gotten to the ways and means stage.

It is essential to separate the discussion of ways and means from the determination of what shall be done. While the practicability of a proposed course of action must be taken into account in the discussion, the claim that it is impracticable must not be used to rule it out. People usually find the ways and means of doing what they really believe in. They have a right to call upon the inventiveness and resourcefulness of the experts in finding ways to carry out their wishes rather than to allow the experts to condemn in advance a proposal on the basis of impracticability. If in making a budget an organization decides what can be raised before it considers what it wants to do, it will find itself with a very inadequate budget and with less than could be raised. Heroic action and real progress will come only as the ways and means discussion becomes the search for plans for putting into effect conclusions on which all are united. The ways and means committee must be the resourceful servant rather than the pessimistic dictator.

In deciding upon ways and means, the first two stages of the group thinking process are repeated in the narrower area of discovering what practical steps may be taken to carry out the conclusion. Where to take hold most effectively, and what will be the difficulties, bring out the situation which will be found in carrying out the conclusion. What steps may be

taken, what will each accomplish, what are the most practicable, what steps will best conserve the values; these enable the group to canvass the possibilities and choose the best. How can these be carried out, how can the difficulties be overcome, put the final touch on the plans. The group is now ready for action directly or through its representatives.

The ways and means discussion differs at several points. In the main decision as to what to do, the search is for a single, united conclusion; in the ways and means, several possibilities may be chosen. The more versatile the group, the more resourcefulness will it use in carrying out its conclusions.

In the ways and means discussion, the reasons for the conclusion become the criteria to use in testing the ways and means proposals. The group must insist that the method used in putting the conclusions into effect shall be consistent with the values on which they are agreed and shall conserve rather than harm these values. Usually these values are points of reference in the ways and means discussion, although sometimes the main underlying questions are considered anew. Practicability becomes a more important factor. The search is for plans which will be effective in carrying out the conclusions of the group.

CHAPTER V

THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF GROUP THINKING

The selection of the leader of a discussion group or forum, or the chairman of a board meeting or a convention, is important. With the chairman rests the responsibility for seeing that the conditions for effective group thinking are provided. Sometimes in public meetings, particularly in conventions, the chairmanship is made a complimentary position. If this seems for any reason advisable, then a chairman of discussions should be selected in addition, if real discussion is expected. While great care has been taken to build the machinery for speaking conventions and to see that it runs smoothly, unfortunately up to date very little attention has been given to the machinery for democratic procedure. It would surprise any person unacquainted with the arrangements for a great speaking convention to know the care with which the details are worked out. The kind and size of the hall, the ventilation, removal of disturbances, arrangement of platform—every detail is looked after to insure the largest opportunity for each speaker to bring his message. But often in gatherings where important deliberations are expected on a democratic basis no more has been done than to name a chairman, quite without reference to his ability to conduct a discussion, and to designate in general terms the question or questions to be considered. All the chairman has done has been to state the question and to recognize the people who wished to participate. The whole affair has been allowed to go haphazardly without any appreciation of group thinking and decision. The result is likely to be an ineffective discussion.

To conduct a discussion successfully is a task which requires special skill and training. In most discussions, the success depends upon the chairman more than upon any other single

factor. Frequently, much time is lost and meetings fail to accomplish any really sound results because of poor chairmanship. When the time is reached when children are trained in school to think together in groups, when colleges give more attention to the thinking procedure, and when this is a technique which has been developed in the democratic life of the community, then the chairman will not be so important. Then the group will understand group thinking and will be able to carry on its own discussion to a larger extent than at present. But the chairman will always be needed, because the members of the group become engrossed in the discussion. Moving from point to point, holding the discussion to the point, and summarizing require the presence of a person who can view the discussion with more perspective.

To be a skilled chairman of a discussion is something which can be learned by many people, but which few have mastered as yet. There is a technique for leadership of discussion quite as much as for any other skill. It comes through practice and training. A person is not born with it. He learns it. He develops the skill. Definite steps can be taken to train leaders of discussion. Some persons with native capacity stumble upon it by trial and error; but like any other skill, it is learned more quickly and efficiently through training. Therefore, if, group thinking is to be widely adopted, attention must be given to developing leaders for such discussions.

In this chapter some of the matters to which the chairman should give attention will be considered.

Mechanical Arrangements

Whether for a small group, a larger forum, or a great convention, the form and arrangement of the room are important. The little Bible discussion groups in Great Britain have been called "Bible Circles." This is a good name because some circular arrangement gives the best results in small group discussions. The important thing is that just as far as possible members have a chance to look into the faces of other members. A

conversation would not be very free in any room if the chairs were so arranged that one looked at the back of the head of the person with whom he was trying to converse; but this is the arrangement in the ordinary assembly. Either a circle or a hollow square should be used in the seating arrangement. Both architects and janitors seem to have a sense of order which makes them feel that it is absolutely essential that chairs be placed in exact rows, and that every person shall have the opportunity to look at the back of the head of the person in front of him. The newspapers commented at the time of the Democratic and the Republican conventions in 1924 that, whereas the hall in Cleveland was much the finer and better auditorium, the arrangement at Madison Square Garden, with the speaker's stand far out toward the center of the rectangle and the delegates and guests arranged around this in a sort of hollow square, gave a much better result.

Participants should be able to take part without rising. This is impracticable in a convention, but is not impossible in a group or even in a forum of some size. What is needed in discussion is brief, frank contribution, time after time, such as happens in a conversation. To take part in group thinking differs from making a speech. In a speech a person tries to include everything he wishes to say on the subject, whether it is on the immediate point or not, and he does not expect to take part again. Group thinking is a bit by bit, point by point, affair in which a contribution is brief and on the immediate subject.

The Procedure

The procedure for a discussional meeting should be worked out with greater care than that for a speaking meeting. In a speaking meeting all that is necessary is to select speakers, assign the topics, and trust the participants to do the rest. Even here some planning together has been found desirable in order to give unity to the meeting. But in a discussional meeting, a thinking procedure is of first importance. This

may be secured through a syllabus worked out in advance; by an arrangement whereby a temporary syllabus is developed at the close of one session and in advance of the next in the light of the progress of the discussion; or the program may be arranged so that the procedure is worked out in the sessions themselves.

Whatever the methods used, the chairman is responsible. He should see that an effective group thinking procedure is followed, that the issues are clearly defined and understood, that the important factors in the situations are brought out and recognized, that the possibilities as to what to do are stated and the real reasons for each felt, that the points of agreement are recognized and the differences understood and explored, that the discussion moves toward an integration of fact and opinion in as united conclusion as is possible. And then he must see that attention is given to ways and means for putting the decision into effect. In short, he is responsible for keeping the discussion from becoming a miscellaneous consideration of one question after another or an argument with no weighing of fact or opinion. He is responsible for securing the *process* of group thinking.

The chairman should give special care that the discussion proceeds from point to point. He must be alert as to the length of the discussion on each question, not cutting it off before any significant thinking has occurred but not allowing it to continue until exhausted or until it is impossible to cover a sufficient number of questions. Sometimes group members become so interested in adding instances and details to the picture of the situation that they have no time left to discuss what to do about it. In the interest of covering all the points, the chairman must not attempt to push the group forward faster than the development of the thought will warrant. However, it is his business to be on the lookout for the time when enough attention has been given to one section of the group thinking process and the group can move on to the next section.

Supplying Data

The chairman will secure the necessary data, so far as possible, from the group. Sometimes data are made available through reading and report in the group by the group members or through report of special assignment to particular members of the group. Information can also be made available through experts brought in for that purpose. These persons have been called "resources" in Young Women's Christian Association conferences. Such personalized encyclopedias have been used successfully at a number of conferences and local groups. Where such experts are used it is wise first to see that they talk in answer to questions which the discussion has raised at such times as their information is needed. There should be opportunity for questions for further understanding of the information. If the chairman has the information, he can himself change from his rôle of chairman and take the function of the expert. In this case it will be wise for the chairman to make it clear that he is changing his function, first, by asking permission of the group; and second, by moving away from the chairman's position while he is giving the information. He must be sure he keeps mental note of the stage of the discussion so he can take it up again when he reassumes the chairman's functions.

However the data are secured and introduced, it is the chairman's business, on the one hand, to present general opinion as to the reliability of facts and to secure a search for the verification of information and, on the other hand, to see that facts are secured and introduced when they are necessary to the progress of the discussion.

Summarizing

Summarizing is an important factor in successful group thinking and one which is usually ignored. A discussion often does not make progress, or appears to arrive nowhere, simply because there is no one responsible objectively to listen to the discussion and register from time to time the progress it has

made. The chairman attempts to be an objective reflector of the actual state of the discussion. When persons are in the midst of it they sometimes lose themselves in the detail and do not recognize what progress has been made.

From time to time, in the course of the discussion and at the transition points, summaries should be made. These are particularly important at the transition points at the close of each stage of the discussion, when the situation and its central problem are reviewed, when reasons for and against proposals are to be gathered together, when the basis of fact and opinion and real differences are to be reviewed, when conclusions have been reached and are to be recognized. The summaries in group thinking take the place of parliamentary devices and voting in the ordinary business procedure. The summary is a recognition of the point now reached by the group, stated in such fashion that it is possible for the discussion to continue rewardingly.

During the progress of the discussion on any question, the chairman is making mental and sometimes written notes. He is sorting out and arranging the contributions, putting together those which make the same point, arranging them into agreements and disagreements. During the opening of the discussion the chairman listens for the important factors in the situation or situations described, for the evidence of specific issues, and for the important considerations mentioned as the persons indicate the "why" of their contributions. He may make brief blackboard notations or keep mental notes. The main possibilities need next to be summarized. If they can be written on a blackboard or made visible in some fashion, all the better. Sometimes in a discussion these points are given numbers and subsequently time is saved by referring to them in this fashion. In the same way, the real reasons for each point need to be summarized as soon as they come into the open. As these are being listed the chairman is looking for agreements and disagreements. It is a useful device to mark the agreement plus and the disagreement minus, connecting them

up so that by the eye, points that are in agreement or that clash may be seen. If exploration is necessary as to what are the facts, he works with the group in arranging for this. If there is evident difference as to what is desirable, as to one's whole point of view, he summarizes this and asks for discussion upon it. Just as soon as no new contribution is being made and all the participation simply adds further illustrations or says in a different way what has already been said, he asks for the close of discussion on that stage and attempts to move on to the next. During this whole process he is looking for the common and more inclusive considerations which bind the group together and he includes these in his phrasing of the questions. Through his recognition of the values and considerations on which the group is united and through the clearness with which he sums up differences, he reflects the actual state of thinking and emotion in the group. The differences must be recognized quite as much as the consensus.

The chairman must not summarize too often. To do so means to interfere unduly with the discussion. But he must not summarize too infrequently. To do so means to let the discussion drift or to give too much time to unessential details. At any stage of the discussion where differences or consensus have emerged, and a summary will help to focus the discussion and open the way to move to the next step, he should summarize. Indeed, he will usually find it helpful to summarize the thinking of the group on any subquestion before stating the next question. Often the next stage is possible because a difference is summarized and discussion focused on a consideration of this difference.

At the close of a discussion, the leader summarizes whatever may be the status of the discussion. It may have reached an integration; there may still be more than one point of view; the question may still be unsettled. But it is important that he recognize whatever stage the group thinking has reached.

Usually the summarizing can best be done by the chairman. If he finds it too difficult to do this alone, he can ask some

person to cooperate with him by giving special attention to summarizing. This use of a special person to do the summarizing has been successfully employed in several gatherings. If there is no such special person and the chairman is having difficulty in making a summary, he should not hesitate to call upon members of the group to help. An occasional call of this kind helps to impress upon the group, that which is really true, that the chairman is merely their representative.

It adds to the effectiveness of his summary, either made on the blackboard or verbally, if the chairman keeps it in the language of the group. It may be in colloquial English, but it is better to use the vernacular of the group than to attempt to make it over into the English of the chairman. Sometimes in response to a summary thus revised a group will comment: "Well, that may be what we said; but it does not sound like it!" This is important. Each person must recognize his own contribution.

The chairman must be ready for fundamental modifications in his summary, as the group may desire, and he should not hesitate to adopt changes in the phrasing which seem to the group members more expressive of their thought. He must be careful, however, that this does not resolve itself into a quibble over phrases. Let him, if necessary, state the issue in several ways and come to the place where there is mutual agreement as to the content without attempt to secure minute agreement on the actual phrasing. A rough summary worked out by the chairman in the midst of the discussion will be better than an attempt at a more polished statement prepared after the discussion. The success of the chairman in this more extemporaneous summarizing will be partly in proportion to his experience and practice as a chairman and partly in proportion to his understanding of the problem being discussed. The chief purpose is not literary form but mutual understanding of the issues and mutual recognition of the important factors in the situation. Of course, such summaries should be edited for the minutes or other permanent records.

Summaries must not be confused with exhortation. Many times the leader feels that he must preach a short sermon at the close of each question, giving his viewpoint without any reference to what the group has said or emphasizing the points in the discussion which appeal to him. A summary is simply a reflection of the exact state of affairs in the discussion. There are two kinds of reporters: the one who records only what favors his side, and the one who reports what actually happened. A common fault in summarizing is for the chairman to wait in the participation until someone says that which suits him best and then to repeat this one contribution as the thinking of the group on this question. There must be an entire willingness on his part to be an impartial chairman reporting the group's progress, rather than being a protagonist for some point of view. If he is, the group will be suspicious, will heckle him, and no constructive conclusion will be possible. His task is to flash, as on a bulletin board, a report of what has happened in each stage of the discussion.

It must be recognized that a conclusion will not always be reached. If the question for discussion is worthwhile, it frequently is of such moment that the group members will be considering it and reconsidering it all of their lives. Indeed, it is not surprising that no conclusion is reached in a discussion period. If the group has agreed easily, it probably means that it has been doing superficial thinking. If no consensus is reached, it does not follow that the group has been a failure. The group session has been a success if every member sees the problem and its significance more clearly, has been able to look at it from varying points of view and in the light of evidence, and has either come to some conviction or has had his thought processes so thoroughly stimulated that he will ponder on the topic after the group is over.

Cooperation with the Group

The chairman will grow accustomed to sensing the attitudes of the group. 'A group or assembly, working earnestly on any

question, shows approvals, disapprovals, or differences of opinion quite manifestly. The chairman's success depends upon his learning how to listen and how to watch the facial and other bodily expressions of the members of the group. As the group finds itself more and more, it becomes increasingly responsive in its approvals and disapprovals, by voice, by facial expression, and by general movements of the body. The chairman can develop this sensitiveness to the group. He can learn to watch the faces of people, to sense their moods, to respond to their approvals and disapprovals. In this way he comes to sense every mood of the group and can cooperate with it in the discriminating manner which characterizes the chairmen of Quaker meetings. As the group members realize that the chairman is trying to help them find their own conclusions and voice their own desires, they will cooperate with him, modify his summaries, help forward the group process as he seeks to be their spokesman.

The spirit or attitude of the session is largely in the hands of the chairman. If he acts as if he were referee for a fight, then he will have the spirit of a fight. If he pits one side against the other in order to make the discussion lively, he will have a contest on his hands. If he tries to swing the discussion toward a point of view with which he agrees, and does not give other points of view a chance, he will develop resentment and bad feeling. If, on the other hand, he tries to get all points of view represented, conducts the discussion in the spirit of cooperation, works with the group in finding what is best, then the members of the group will have the same attitudes.

It is usually difficult for individuals to raise questions or suggest points of view not approved by the group. Therefore unpopular contributions have to be encouraged. The chairman must take care that individuals are not embarrassed in making them. It is easy for him to silence persons by sarcasm, or by wit or by-play which causes a laugh, to the embarrassment of a member of the group.

A chairman must have special patience with a new group until it finds itself. A group working on a question through discussion and investigation gradually becomes a cooperative group. At first the members may be strange to each other. They may be strange to the method. They may not be accustomed to discussing things for themselves. It takes sometimes a few hours and sometimes a few days for the group to find itself. If the chairman will commence on the simpler issues, those on which the group has more experience, those on which there is the least emotion, he will find that, out of this earlier practice of working together, a group soon becomes a corporate whole. If in this preliminary practice he establishes his own honesty and fairness as chairman, so that any preliminary suspicion of him is eliminated, a group will be willing to cooperate with him in finding its own will.

At times, the chairman's cooperation with the group takes the form of calling the discussion back to the point. There is always danger that the discussion will scatter. This does not mean that the chairman is not willing to shift the focus of the discussion if the group shows its desire to do so; but it does mean that if one problem is being discussed and a person wishes to speak on a point irrelevant to the discussion, the chairman as the agent of the group shall rule him out. American deliberative assemblies frequently show this tendency to do irrelevant talking. It is also a common habit for a person not to stick to the point but to use any occasion for making a speech on some particular hobby of his own. Something which has been said has an association with an allied line of interest and starts a person talking. The chairman should be on the alert for speeches which represent pet ideas but which are not on the point, and tactfully rule them out. Persons who are to take part in group discussions should read "Joining in Public Discussion,"¹ for the group members have a responsibility for learning how to participate in group thinking.

The chairman should, on the one hand, get every person to

¹ SHEFFIELD, A. D., "Joining in Public Discussion."

take part and see to it that all points of view are represented, and, on the other hand, restrain the inveterate talker and keep him from monopolizing the discussion. Just to look encouragingly toward those who are not taking part and not to look toward the ones who want to participate incessantly is a help. Frequently the expression of the face indicates that a person is on the point of taking part and just recognizing this desire will bring timid ones into the discussion. Sometimes the chairman may call upon certain ones by name. If a person persists in monopolizing the discussion he may find it necessary to restrain the talkative member. He can do this easily by tactfully saying, "Wait a minute, Mr. —, we want to hear what Mr. — thinks about this question." This recognizes the value of the inveterate talker's contribution but asks him to postpone participation until some silent members can be heard from. If there is more than one session of the group, the chairman can see the inveterate talker personally and enlist his cooperation in getting all to participate.

It is important that points of view shall be represented by those who hold them. A person cannot give a point of view secondhand with the glow of life and enthusiasm that comes if the person who holds that point of view represents it. But it is not always possible to get persons on all sides of the question present at the discussion. Then an effort must be made to secure the introduction of these points of view either by inviting someone to represent the position, or by the chairman's undertaking to represent it. The chairman can say, "Now I know a person who would say this in regard to your suggestions," and then he can, with all the glow of enthusiasm he can command, represent the point of view of his friend. Then he can say to the group, "What would you say to him, were he present?" One evening in a group where every person was in favor of a military policy and where the discussion would have been entirely without interest because everybody was agreed, the chairman represented in the third person a personal friend who felt strongly the pacifist position. Giving

it this glow of reality which came from representing his friend, the discussion had both interest and vitality. Here again it is necessary for the chairman to make clear his change of rôle from chairman to representative of an absent member.

The Chairman's Emotions

The chairman must be careful to keep his emotions from leading him to bias the discussion. He cannot be a protagonist. Any person who has strong prejudices, who is opinionated, who persists in pressing his viewpoint against all comers will find difficulty in being the fair chairman of a discussion where various and conflicting points of view must be given due consideration. A leader of this sort tends to break into the discussion if it is going contrary to his own opinion and he feels the group may come to a wrong conclusion. This may be particularly the case on questions concerning which he feels keenly. Indeed, he always faces the question as to whether he can be a fair chairman on an issue in which he is critically involved or feels very strongly. He will find it difficult not to bias the discussion and to be really fair in the summaries. If he does feel strongly on a question, his best course of action is to admit to himself and to the group his difficulty by stating his bias and feelings frankly, saying he will attempt to be a fair chairman, but that the group should know his attitudes so it can check him if unconsciously his convictions influence his chairmanship. The safeguard of fairness comes in the chairman's trust of the group process. Because he believes in group thinking, his interest is not in winning the group by suggestion, subtle flattery, emotional appeal, or argument for his point of view. He does not feel he must keep the group from deciding what he thinks is wrong. His only concern is to see that the group meets, so far as possible, the conditions of effective thinking, and that it has a chance intelligently to come to its own conclusions.

On questions where there is strong emotion and particularly where there is suspicion or hate, it is especially important that

the chairman should maintain an objective attitude. No constructive results will be reached until this emotion is released by being expressed, and that with vehemence. If the chairman has become tied up in the discussion emotionally he will be the immediate cause of the explosion and it will be fought around him personally. He will have taken emotional attitudes which will lead those who oppose and are suspicious to take their emotion out on him, and others will rally to his defense. Thus, the whole matter will have become very personal. He will have become the center for the divisions of the group and thereby be robbed of any possibility of getting the emotional conflict adjusted. Further, he will be an unusual person, if, under these circumstances, he does not himself defend, argue, get angry, and add to the confusion. If, on the other hand, he has kept his objective attitude as chairman, this emotion will be released seemingly at him, but he will not receive it personally. The emotions will be the real ones of the group which he can receive and summarize as he would any other contribution. If he can keep calm and poised and summarize these emotional thrusts, the explosion over, the group will go forward constructively.

While there is danger that the chairman will interfere too much, sometimes a chairman interferes too little. Thus a leader commented regarding leadership of a group: "I think I could have summarized more to good advantage without really interfering with the freedom of the discussion. I feel that I asked too few questions. In my extreme desire to make the discussion absolutely theirs, I think I let them wander too much of the time on the interpretation of words." While a chairman must not himself monopolize the discussion, he is more than a cold dispassionate onlooker. Fairness and open-mindedness do not involve coldness and unconcern.

Cautions to the Chairman

Even when a leader has decided to confine himself to a chairman's functions, he often does fall into certain faults which

greatly hinder the discussion. The most common is for the chairman to take part every time a member of the group speaks. Either he repeats what the group member says or makes some comment upon it, or asks another question. If he repeats what a group member says, he is discourteous, for he is assuming that the statement was not clear enough for the others to understand. Further, he wastes time, for he doubles the time taken by each participant, and hinders the interest of the discussion by lessening the give and take between the group members. If he comments upon it or argues about it because he does not like it, he is taking advantage of his position as chairman to monopolize the time unduly to present his own views. If he asks another question, he is either unnecessarily repeating the question already before the group or not giving enough time for the discussion of the question he has already asked. In any case, to break in each time a member of the group takes part means that the discussion becomes one between the chairman and the group rather than a give and take between the group members. The questions should be tossed into the group and the discussion should go back and forth among the group members rather than be tossed from the leader to the group and back to the leader again.

The leader at times is inveigled into taking part unduly because the group warms up slowly and he feels it is not lively enough. So he commences to prod the group with such questions as: "Don't you think that ——?" "Isn't it your opinion that ——?" "Wouldn't it be so?" If a group is to do genuine thinking, time for pondering will be necessary and it probably will warm up slowly. In an argument, persons respond immediately, and with warmth, for they have their minds made up in advance. A group thinking process is more deliberative. As a matter of fact, the quiet time is often the most significant. If the question is worth while, the group members may pause and think before they reply in discussion. If the leader will be patient, however, he will be surprised to find how steadily the interest does increase. One person's participation stimu-

lates another's. If no discussion develops in a reasonable time, it is usually because the immediate question is of no significance to the group, in which case the leader should allow the discussion to shift to something of concern.

The chairman may become inveigled into undue participation by questions directed to him from the group. In this way, he often becomes the center of a discussion which resolves itself into question and answer between the group and the chairman. In this situation, he has forgotten that the question is in reality not asked of him personally but directed to him in his representative capacity as chairman. He should maintain his representative rôle, therefore, and instead of replying refer the question back to the group. The only exception is when he is an expert as well as chairman and is asked a question of fact on which he alone has the information. A chairman must recognize that it is a most difficult problem for him to restrain himself from taking part unduly in the discussion but if he will watch himself, he can develop the necessary self-restraint.

The question is often asked: Has the chairman not as much right to participate as any member of the group? At times the chairman has been selected from the group, is as deeply concerned in the issue as any member, and is quite as able to make valuable contributions as the others. Such a chairman is just as much a member as any other person and has technically just as much right to participate. There is a real question whether he can do so and be at the same time a successful chairman. If he fulfils his duties as chairman he will probably have all he can do. If he is to keep the issues clear, summarize the discussion from time to time, see that the procedure goes forward, he will be kept more than busy. If he participates, he is in danger of getting so interested in the discussion that he loses the perspective of the discussion and allows confusion to develop. A chairman thus engrossed in the discussion is not free to see issues emerge, to note agreements and disagreements, to summarize adequately. This is recognized

in parliamentary procedure by denying the chairman the right of debate and vote. His great contribution to the discussion is making it possible for the members of the gathering to think together, and most chairmen will find this function all they are capable of handling.

If it is a question of genuine concern to him and he feels he must take part in the discussion as a member of the group, then he should ask temporarily to be excused from the chairman's functions. He need not call someone else to the chair, but can take his place temporarily in the group to indicate his change of function. Even then, if the chairman represents the viewpoint of one party to the discussion, as he is likely to do, he tends, by participating, to set the discussion on edge. Those opposed tend to argue with him rather than give themselves to the issue. If this does not happen, the group may become quiescent and simply accept the statements of the chairman, particularly if he is older, as expert opinion which they should not question. In short, it will usually forward the discussion if the leader will confine himself to the rôle of chairman and keep his personal viewpoint in the background.

A chairman may easily be deceived as to the degree of his participation in the discussion. A useful check is to have someone hold a watch on him quietly and record the number of minutes he and the group take respectively. A similar check can be made on the degree of participation of a chairman and the various members of the group by having some one record the number of times each participates. This serves as a check not only upon the chairman but also on talkative members of the group, and may call the chairman's attention to the silent members.

Qualifications of a Successful Chairman

The chairman of a discussion must be a person of reasonably alert mind. Leadership of a discussion requires the quick adjustment of a game of tennis rather than the poised deliberation of a game of golf. Like the quarterback of a team, the

discussion chairman must be able to sense developing situations quickly and be able to meet them with a fair degree of readiness. Frequently, he has to keep even in his thinking with the rapid give and take of many alert minds. Therefore, the person who is very deliberate, who is a phlegmatic thinker, who gets muddled or confused in an argument, who is slow in getting the point of a discussion, who is not able to adjust himself with a fair degree of facility to a new situation will probably become lost in the discussion and allow it to come to confusion. This is no criticism of the person who is more deliberate. Perhaps he may do a much better piece of work in certain lines of endeavor than the more alert individual. But he will not make so good a discussion leader.

The chairman must have in the realm of thinking the qualities which make the diagnosing physician, or the orchestra conductor. The diagnosing physician must give attention to every detailed symptom, he must consider every possibility of cause, but if he is a great diagnostician he sees each in relation to the others and to the picture he is making of this patient's actual condition. Unless he can both analyze and synthesize, he is not a reliable diagnostician. So the orchestra director recognizes the contribution of each instrument, but he hears all in their relationship in the synthesis of the orchestra. He misses any type of instrument, even though its absence might go unnoticed by the audience, and he brings out the contribution of each instrument, but he feels these instruments in their relationship and builds the contribution of each into the harmony of the orchestra.

It is this combination of analytic and synthetic capacity which the chairman of the discussion must develop. He brings out every detail in the situation, every individual contribution of the group members, but he sees each in its relation to other contributions and to the total picture of the situation or to the total conclusion as to what to do. He must be able to see the bearing of various contributions to the progress of the discussion.

It would seem that the integration of the Thorndike conception of an experience called the stimulus leading to an experience called the response with the Gestalt suggestion that both stimulus and response are complicated structures offers the best background for the interpretation of this process. The capacity to break things up into their parts but at the same time to see them in their relationships, is found in original nature; but skill to the point of the artist is developed by practice. When the scientist is lost in the details of his science, he does not become the creative person; when the physician is lost in detailed symptoms his diagnosis is unreliable; when the director hears only the detailed instruments, the symphony is mechanical. If, on the other hand, each sees only a confused total without recognition of the details, it is equally uncreative or unreliable. The two belong together. Group leadership is an analyzing-synthesizing process and the chairman must develop this combination of abilities.

The scientist, the musician, and the group leader have each become an artist when this attention to detail in relation to the totality can be given with such skill that the attention to detail is lost in the total picture, and results seem to have been reached without reference to the details. So we are inclined to say that a person who has attained this degree of skill reaches his conclusion by intuition independent of attention to the process, or that the musician is the genius who does not have to master technique. As a matter of fact, his technique has become so mastered that it is no longer evident. Such an attainment does not mean an absence of attention to detail but the supremest attainment in technique.

Because the individual has not as yet developed this ability in the realm of chairmanship should not be discouraging. It is developed here, as in other realms, by practice. Just as the physician will commence with simpler cases and the musical director with easier music and a smaller group of musicians, so the chairman can commence practicing on less difficult ques-

tions and with smaller groups. He will undertake the directorship of the complicated assembly, which corresponds to the opera in music, only after he has developed skill in less difficult responsibilities.

Along with alertness, the chairman must have poise and self-restraint. His business is to get other people to express themselves rather than to monopolize the discussion himself. A person who is an inveterate talker, who tends to monopolize any conversation of which he is a part, who has not learned how to listen to other person's suggestions, will tend to do all the talking in the discussion rather than fulfill the chairman's functions. Persons who are accustomed to occupying a speaker's or a preacher's place in a meeting usually do not make good chairmen. They have been accustomed to monopolize the talking.

Perhaps the chief characteristic a chairman needs is patience. If it is a question to which he has given considerable thought, he wants the group to move faster than it does or to reach conclusions more quickly. He is not willing to give them as much time as he needed when he himself was studying the question. He forgets that even for a practiced individual thinker, finding the way out in a situation is a slow process. His tendency is to prod the group, not to be willing to give it the opportunity to find its own way out. It may take a group longer to think its way through a problem than it takes an individual to do the same thing; but if the group is involved, the group process is probably, in the long run, more expeditious than to attempt to fit together the results of individual thinking. The group process, with its check of mind against mind and experience against experience, is certainly one in which the group can have more confidence than to turn over its decision to a committee or an individual. The chairman will defeat any reliable and satisfactory conclusion, if he attempts to press for decision too soon. While his business is to prevent unnecessary loss of time, he must recognize that thinking is a growth process. The best conditions for growth

can be furnished; but to force the growth unduly is to fail to secure a healthy result.

A stimulating, radiant personality is an asset. A person who shows himself to have glowing interest in the group and who tends to call out the best in other people, stimulates discussion and gives warmth, earnestness, and genuineness to it.

CHAPTER VI

EXPLORING THE QUESTION IN PREPARATION FOR A DISCUSSION

It is sometimes assumed that if there is to be a discussion no preparation is necessary in advance; that nothing will be required but to state the question and ask persons to talk upon it; that even the presiding officer may be selected after the meeting opens. This is to misunderstand entirely the discus- sional process.

In order to understand the preparation which a chairman must make, the function of the chairman should be kept in mind (see Chap. V). He is responsible for helping the group to have an opportunity for clear thinking. This involves preparation on his part in both content and method. He will not make a good chairman if he is ignorant of the question to be discussed, knows nothing of the situation or situations the group is facing, and does not understand the issues. Under these circumstances, he will miss the point of contributions from the group and will not be able to cooperate with the group members in reaching a conclusion. He needs to know both the personnel of the group and something of the question the group is to discuss. The "what" of the discussion must be explored.

But he must also give attention to the "how" of the discus- sion. Method is important. He must be able to cooperate with the group in getting the question defined, in bringing out the relevant factors, in understanding and exploring possibil- ities, in coming to a conclusion. This process involves method as well as content. Both the "what" and the "how" of the discussion are important.

In this chapter, the preliminary preparation required of the chairman, if he is to have sufficient mastery of the probable

content of a discussion, will be considered. In the next two chapters suggestions will be given on methods of securing a fruitful discussion.

The chairman need not be an expert on the subject. It may be better if he is not, for if he is an expert he may not be as open to the points of view of others. But he will not be a good chairman unless he studies the question in its setting or explores the situation the group is facing, so that he is as much, if not more, acquainted with it than are individual members of the group. His preparation is much the same as that necessary for a lawyer who is to plead a case, although his relation to the question and his function in the discussion are decidedly different. When a lawyer has a case, he makes a special study of the question involved until he comes to understand the issues and to see what evidence is necessary. He does not himself need to be an expert upon these questions, but he will need to make use of experts for such evidence as is necessary in trying the case. He needs to know enough about the case so that he can ask questions, so that he sees the point of argument and evidence. A chairman is in much the same position on the matter of preparation. He must be well enough acquainted with the question discussed so that he sees issues when they arise, understands the significance of contributions in the discussion, and is able to make discriminative and intelligible summaries. This involves careful preparation. The more extended his general acquaintance with the field, the better; but in any case he must make specific preparation for each discussion.

From one point of view, more preparation for a discussion is necessary than for an address. In an address the person preparing determines the issue and decides the range of his presentation. There is usually no opportunity for questions, and the audience does not interfere. No one, therefore, will bring in any points outside of the realm of those introduced by the speaker. The situation is entirely in his control. He can hide his ignorance if necessary. In a discussion, however, the

chairman must be ready to cooperate with the group in any questions which may be raised. Therefore, he must have studied the issue from various points of view so as to cooperate intelligently.

From another point of view, less preparation is necessary than is required for certain types of addresses, particularly where there is opportunity for questions. If an individual is asked to lecture upon a subject as an expert, he is held to be rather completely informed upon it; but in a discussion the chairman need have no embarrassment if he proves to be ignorant at any point. As a matter of fact, this is the attitude a speaker or lecturer ought to be able to assume because no one can be completely informed on any subject. If the chairman discovers that the discussion cannot proceed further because of lack of data he can ask the cooperation of the group in plans for securing this information. As chairman, he is simply responsible for seeing that the ignorance is recognized and that steps are taken to secure the necessary information.

The distinction between a person's study of a question in order to solve a problem of his own and his study in preparation for leading a group must be kept clearly in mind. In his preparation for the group he is not interested in his own problems but in the problems of the group. He must be thinking all of the time in terms of the group of which he is to be chairman. He must be asking himself: What is their situation? What are their questions? Where do their interests lie? This means that a leader must find out as much about the group and its situation as possible. He may know this because he is himself a member of the group and so closely associated with it that in the ordinary course of events he knows its problems. Indeed, their problems under such circumstances will probably be his as well. Even an adult leader, in relationship with a group of boys, may accomplish this same result by alertness when on hikes, in games, and in his round of associations with the group.

If he does not hold this relationship, he may consult with representatives from the group before making his preparation. To talk the questions over frankly with such representatives and to lead them to reflect on the group situation is next best to actual association by the chairman himself. Perhaps it is even better for the chairman, with two or three members from the group, to carry through the actual preparation for the group meeting together.

PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION WHERE THE GROUP MEMBERS ARE FACING THE SAME SITUATION

In beginning the preparation for leading a discussion, the first thing that is necessary is to recognize the degree of definiteness of the question and the stage which has been reached by the group in the thinking process. Real situations come before groups at the following stages.

Sometimes a group is facing a *baffling or confused situation* in which the issues are not clear and no possible courses of action have been defined. There is tension and difficulty. The group is baffled and confused. What shall they do about it? The following are a few samples. Many other illustrations will occur in the life of any group.

A bunch of boys are restless and get into mischief. The workmen in a factory are unhappy and dissatisfied and threaten to go on strike, even though they have no very definitely defined grievances. A school is in disorder with very little interest on the part of the pupils in their studies and the teacher is at her wit's end. There are bad times in a nation; industries are closed, wages have gone down, there is a general state of depression. In Europe there is a state of tension and bad feeling, but no nation is facing any immediate crises. In all of these cases there are either symptoms of difficulty or a group faces a definite situation in which it must do something. But the causes of the difficulty are not defined, nor are the issues in the situation clear.

When the *problem is definitely defined*, the situation facing

the group has reached a second stage in definiteness. The problem to be solved or the question to be decided has emerged. The difficulty with the bunch of boys is that they have a day off from school or work and they have no plan as to how they should put in the time. The question is: What shall they do on this Saturday off? In the factory, the difficulty seems to be with reference to wages and hours, and the question is: What shall be done about the scale of wages and hours? In the school, the difficulty is located around lack of interest in the subjects for study and the question is: What can be done to make these subjects more interesting? In the nation, the difficulty is definitely located in the surplus of gold in the country and the flow of gold from other nations and the question is: What can be done to equalize the gold supply internationally? In European affairs, it has become recognized that the tension centers around the fear one nation has of another, economically and politically. The question is: What can be done to prevent the increase of armament and the danger of war?

When the question comes in the form of *alternatives specifically suggested*, it has reached a stage of definiteness in which proposals have been made as to what should be done. These proposals, however, frequently come out of relation to the situation which they are supposed to meet. The boys who have a day off and are wondering what to do frequently find very definite suggestions formulated in the minds of the group members. Somebody says, "Let's hike!" Somebody else says, "Let's play baseball!" Still another says, "Aw no, let's go down and have a swim!" So the question is defined in terms of three definite proposals. In the industrial plant the men frequently have already come with certain proposals for increase in wages and changes of hours, and the company has certain definite alternative proposals. In the school room, the question frequently is defined for the teacher as between using discipline to make the group study, offering prizes as incentives, trying to motivate the subject by means of various life

points of contact, or shifting the curriculum so that it is on a more interesting and life basis. Under the circumstances what shall she do? In the case of the European continent there are definite proposals. Some say the World Court; others the League of Nations; still others, the outlawry of war.

Sometimes the question comes in terms of a *single definite proposal* with no alternatives. The boys are invited to spend the day at a farmer's in the country. He offers them plenty of food, country milk, and the fun of outdoor life for a day. The workmen who are dissatisfied have been offered 5 per cent increase of wages. The teacher has a definite change in the course of study suggested to her. The nations are asked to join the League of Nations.

Frequently a group is facing a situation where it knows, or thinks it knows, definitely what it wants to do; but is puzzled as to the *ways and means of carrying out the conclusion*. The group knows that it wants to go on a hike and where it wants to go, but the questions of transportation, food, financing, in order to carry out the proposal have to be decided. The management and the workmen have both agreed to a shop-council form of organization as the way of settling differences, but how to get this inaugurated and intelligently carried out is the problem they are facing. The teacher has decided to adopt a project type of curriculum but this puts new demands upon her, both in content and method; and she has to decide how she can put this into effect.

To summarize, a group may face a question in any one of five stages: (1) a baffling or confused situation; (2) a problem definitely defined; (3) alternatives specifically suggested; (4) a single definite proposal; (5) ways and means of carrying out a conclusion. The first thing necessary for the chairman of the discussion is to determine the stage in which the question is likely to come before the group, for his preparation, both as to what will be discussed and as to how he will conduct the discussion, depends upon just the stage of definiteness with which the question comes.

Let us consider these types of questions one by one and let us see just what a chairman would do in preparation for the leadership of a group for each particular type of question.

I. *A Baffling or Confused Situation*

The chairman must know both the personnel of the group and the situation the group is facing. Who will be in the group, age, experience, interests, prejudices, intellectual ability, etc.? Where, how, and why is this situation baffling the group? The purpose is to define the central problem and to discover what factors in the situation are important in relation to this problem and then to see what can be done about it. The following are questions the chairman may ask in his preliminary exploration of a baffling or confused situation.

1. *Exploration of a baffling situation to determine its central problem and discover the important factors in relation to this problem.*

a. *Descriptive Analysis:*

- (1) What are the evidences of difficulty in the situation? What are the symptoms which are indicative of difficulty?
- (2) Describe the actual situation the group members are facing, indicating the points at which it seems most to baffle the group and the chief circumstances or elements in the situation which make it baffling.
- (3) What is the background of the present confused situation? How did it happen to become difficult?
- (4) At what points is there evidence of strong emotion? What are the sources of this feeling?

b. *Synthesis Summary:*

Glance back over the material which has been jotted down in answering the questions under 1, Descriptive Analysis, and select and list the most important circumstances or elements in the situation, the chief ways in which it baffles the group, and the principal sources of strong emotion. These form the background of the picture. State what will probably be the central question. This is the center of the picture and will be the focus of the discussion.

2. *Discovering what to do* (in meeting the problem as outlined).
- a. *Possibilities to Be Examined:*
 - (1) What proposals as to what to do will probably be offered? (What suggestions will probably come from the group?)
 - (2) Why will each probably be suggested? In other words, what are the real reasons you think each is believed in? On what grounds would each probably be defended? Be sure to be alert for values the members of the group will feel are endangered if their proposal is not followed.
 - (3) What possibilities will probably not be suggested? Why?
- b. *Recognition of the Bonds Which Hold the Group Together:*

Glance over the probable reasons listed for each possibility, and see if you discover any bonds (purposes, concerns) which will probably unite the group members and make them desirous of finding a solution of the problem together.
- c. *Summary of Probable Underlying Agreements and Disagreements:*
 - (1) Glance again over the probable reasons listed for each possibility and summarize the matters on which there is likely to be agreement. This is in order to make a preliminary forecast of how the discussion may be narrowed to the real disagreements.
 - (2) Glance again over the probable reasons listed and summarize the matters on which there will probably be disagreement or clash. On what important underlying questions will the group probably be divided? Particularly what will be the most important conflicts of value involved in opposing courses of action?
- d. *Forecast of Data Probably Needed for the Discussion:*
 - (1) Which of the questions on which the group will probably be divided involve matters of fact? What data will be needed to answer these questions of fact?
 - (2) Which of the questions on which the group will probably be divided involve differences of point of view or of conviction as to what is desirable? In what ways, if any, will the group members need to be supplemented for an adequate presentation of these points of view?
- e. *Coming to a Decision:*

Make a tentative forecast of possible decisions which will

integrate the disagreements in this situation, and indicate the probable reasons for each.

II. *A Question Definitely Defined*

The task before a leader is simpler where a question is already defined. His business there is to see this question in its setting. No question is ever the same for two groups, so he needs to come to understand how this question will probably look to this particular group and what are the factors which will seem to them important. Factors which may seem to an outsider irrelevant or of minor importance frequently loom large as the causes of difficulty or as elements to be taken into account in the decision. The following is an outline the leader may use in the preliminary exploration of a question definitely defined.

I. *Preliminary exploration of a question to understand it from the group's viewpoint and to discover the relevant factors in the situation.*

a. *Descriptive Analysis:*

- (1) Why is this question of interest or of concern to the group?
- (2) Where and how is the group facing this question? Under what circumstances did it arise?
- (3) What interests important to the group are involved?
- (4) At what points is there strong feeling or deep-seated prejudice? Why?
- (5) What difficulties are likely to arise in meeting the question? Why?

b. *Synthesis Summary:*

Glance back over the material which has been jotted down in answering the questions under I, Descriptive Analysis, and restate the specific question so that it will be clear just how it will probably appear as a problem to your group. Then summarize the relevant factors to be taken into account, circumstances under which it has arisen, the reasons it is a problem to the group, the most important interests to be conserved, difficulties and strong feelings to be dealt with.

2. *Discovering what to do:*

From this point the outline would be the same as the exploration of a baffling or confused situation. See pages 91-2.

III. *Alternatives Specifically Suggested*

Where there are definite proposals the chairman should in his preliminary preparation understand the reason for each proposal in relation to the situation for which it is offered as a solution. In short, the reasons for any proposal are not general and abstract ones, but the considerations which particular situations and particular individuals bring. Under one set of circumstances, an individual might advocate one proposal, and under another set of circumstances a different one. It is necessary in the discussion that the alternatives be rooted back in the situation the group is facing and be looked at from the viewpoint of the group members. The following questions would be useful in preliminary preparation:

1. *Exploring the situation for which proposals have been suggested.*

a. *Descriptive Analysis:*

- (1) What difficulties or problems in the situation the group is facing are these proposals designed to meet?
- (2) Describe the actual situation the group members are facing, indicating particularly the chief circumstances or elements in the situation which have led to these proposals and must be taken into account in testing them.
- (3) At what points is there strong feeling or deep-set prejudice? Why?

b. *Synthesis Summary:*

Choose the most important circumstances or elements. State the central problem in the situation.

2. *What to do:*

From this point the outline would be the same as the exploration of a baffling and confused situation. See pages 91-2.

IV. *A Definite Proposal*

In this case there are two important things to determine.

Will this definite proposal probably satisfy the group in the particular situation it is facing? Will it probably be the most satisfying proposal which the group might adopt? Frequently a proposal is considered solely in terms of the reasons for and against it. If there seem to be no serious reasons against it, it is adopted. This may mean that the group will be uneasy about the decision; and it does not insure that it is the best solution that could be determined. Any possibility can be appraised only as it is considered in relation to possible alternatives. Consequently in the preliminary exploration the leader will need to discover what other possibilities would be live options to the group. Having listed these, his procedure would be the same as under III above.

V. Ways and Means of Carrying Out a Conclusion

In preparing for a ways and means discussion, it is first necessary that the leader shall understand just what it is the group has decided. Indeed, this may be the necessary first step in the opening of the discussion. If the chairman comes into the discussion first at the "ways and means" stage, he will need to review the decision at which the group has arrived in relation to other alternatives which they faced and understand something of the differences and agreements which emerged in the discussion. He will need to push his exploration still further and know the personnel of the group and something of the situation in relation to which this decision was reached. In a discussion of ways and means, the chairman must come to know the factors in the situation which this course of action was adopted to meet and the ends the group expects it to accomplish. Certain methods will be refused because they endanger the values which the course of action was intended to conserve. But his attention will be focused chiefly on the steps which will be necessary to put the conclusion into effect and the places where difficulties are likely to arise. Indeed, he must be ready in the discussion for some reconsideration of the decision, because

frequently when a group thinks it is at the "ways and means" stage, it will find that it really disagrees as to what should be done. This is particularly true if they assume that they agree as to what should be done and have not really explored the question together. For instance, a group was asking how they could help in clearing newsstands of obscene literature, but when they considered steps to accomplish this the members of the group found they disagreed as to what literature was obscene. It was necessary, therefore, to reconsider the conclusion, which involved a rethinking of the entire question.

The following are questions which might be used in preparing for a ways and means discussion:

- I. *How to Put the Decision into Operation* (ways and means)
 - a. What steps will probably be considered by the group in putting the decision into effect? Why will each probably be considered an effective way of carrying out the decision?
 - b. Where will the difficulties probably arise? What are the sources of these difficulties? How can they be met?
 - c. Just what steps will probably be given most favorable consideration?

PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION WHERE THE GROUP IS FACING A SIMILAR PROBLEM IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

The suggestions thus far have assumed a group the members of which are facing the same situation. Frequently persons facing the same kind of a problem in different situations come together to help one another know what to do as individuals. Parents may meet to consider certain health, educational, or other problems of their children; teachers may meet to discuss problems of teaching; individuals, puzzled to know what attitude to take on such current questions as war, race, or sex, may come together to consider these questions. In such groups individuals seek light upon questions in order that they may as individuals know better how to act. Such discussions cannot come to united conclusions which bind those present.

The results of such group thinking are registered only in light thrown upon the question for the individual members.

The preparation for such a discussion would be, in general, the same. The chairman, however, must foresee the various situations which the individual group members are facing and the variety of instances they will have in mind. He will then seek to state the common problem and include in the relevant factors the elements most important in all the situations or instances. Under "What to Do" more attention will be given to the circumstances under which this course of action will be considered desirable and the circumstances under which another course of action would be advocated.

PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION OF A PROBLEM BY A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP

A third type of group is one of representative character. In such a gathering each comes, not as an individual, but as a spokesman for another group. He represents, not his own individual opinion, but what he thinks his group would think. He modifies his own thinking in so far as he is convinced that the members of his group would follow him, if they had the evidence he is securing. Such groups are boards or committees in organizations, student government bodies in educational institutions, councils and other similar bodies within industry, state and national legislative assemblies and such a gathering as the League of Nations. As already suggested, this is the theory on which American life is, in general, conducted. The preparation for the chairmanship of such a group would be the same as already outlined, except that the chairman must think of the problems and attitudes of the groups the individuals represent as well as the characteristics of the representatives.

PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION OF A GENERAL TOPIC

Thus far in the chapter we have outlined the preparation which a leader must make in preparing to lead a group, the

members of which are facing a situation in some form. Sometimes a group has a sort of vague general interest in a particular topic and it is proposed that this topic be discussed. At times, the topic is as broad and indefinite as democracy, good-will, or friendship. In other cases, it is a label for a general area of concrete problems such as race relations, industrial democracy, relations of men and women. The main difficulty is that the group does not intend to do anything about it, or is in no position to do anything. Securing intelligence and building an attitude are the prime objects of the discussion.

The first step which is necessary is to delimit and define the topic in terms of the particular group. If it is a question of democracy, the chairman must discover why the group wants to discuss democracy, what about democracy interests it, what questions on democracy it has, what instances where democracy is involved are before it. If it is race relations or relations of men and women, again it must be put in terms of definite cases or situations. In short, topics are simply labels for general areas of interest. The interests within these areas vary as widely as life itself. A group that says it wishes to discuss this or that topic has evidently had some experience, or has faced some situations, which have made it want to discuss these topics and the first thing that is necessary is to help the group discover what it is about these topics it wishes to discuss.

Sometimes the group insists that it is interested in the topic in general and that it does not want to discuss it in terms of specific situations. It must be admitted that such a dialectic type of discussion is a form of recreation to many people. They enjoy exploring abstract questions and passing arguments back and forth without a recognition of the meaning of the terms in life. What we must remember is that however interesting or enjoyable such discussion may be, it has little or no effect upon the attitudes and conduct of the group members. Even though it is frequently found that there is an interest in an abstract discussion, it is usually important that the topic

shall not be left indefinite and abstract, but that it shall be made definite and specific in terms of the actual interests, problems, and experiences of the group.

This does not mean that in a discussion general or abstract terms are never used. But they are useful in discussion only as they are defined. The definition cannot be a formal or dictionary definition. For discussion, terms have to be defined in experience. They mean to any individual what that individual's experience has made them mean. If the experiences of two individuals have been entirely different, the same term will mean entirely different things. Frequently, discussions become very confused or useless argument takes place because what the term means to one person is different from what it means to another. Indeed, in the discussion people are frequently talking about entirely different things and their contributions have little relation one to the other, even though they seem to be saying the same thing. General terms can be used successfully, only in proportion as through actual experience together, or through the reporting of experience one to the other, these terms have been defined so that their meaning in life to all in the group is understood. It is possible to use the terms "democracy," "freedom," "growth," "cooperation," "brotherhood," "respect for personality," and "good will," provided these terms are symbols which bring up experiences and images similar or common.

The following outline can be used in defining and delimiting a general topic:

1. *Defining the problem under the general topic and locating it in the life experience of the group.*

a. *Descriptive Analysis* (Where, how and why this topic concerns the group):

(1) Describe the actual situation or situations along the line of the general topic which the group members face, indicating especially why and how this general problem is of interest or concern to the group, and where it affects the lives of the group members.

- (2) Glance over the description and state specifically:
 - (a) In what aspects of this general topic are the group members particularly interested or concerned? Why?
 - (b) What important questions along the line of this topic are up and should be answered? What is the real issue in each?
 - (c) What difficulties or perplexities are they facing? What are the causes? What suggestions as to a way out?
 - (d) What decisions are the group members, individually or as a group, facing? What are the alternatives?

b. Synthesis Summary:

- (1) Group together the material developed in the analysis which represents different aspects of the same problem. Summarize the specific question each grouping represents so that it will be clear just where, how, and why it is a problem to the group.
- (2) Select from these questions the one central question which will probably be the basis for the discussion under the topic. If more than one seems equally of interest, arrange for a selection by the group or for more than one discussion. Be sure that the problem is sufficiently limited and defined so that rewarding discussion is possible.

Frequently it will be discovered that there is no real interest in the topic at all. The only reason it was proposed was the vague impression that it is an important one to be discussed or that somebody said it ought to be faced. In this case, the only thing to do is to pass it up altogether.

Once having defined and delimited a topic in terms of the actual situation or situations of the group, the process of group thinking becomes the same as for any other sort of question. Indeed, it will be found that, in the defining and delimiting, various groups are within the area of a topic at the different stages of definiteness. Some have a confused or vague idea of the issue, some have a question definitely defined, some have alternative proposals, others have a single proposal. After having defined the type of interest, it will be

necessary to explore further by means of one of the outlines already suggested.

PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION OF A TEXTBOOK OR A MAGAZINE ARTICLE

A book is often proposed as the basis for a discussion or series of discussions. It may be the study book which is supposed to be used that year, or it may have a title which appeals to the group, or it may discuss a question of vital concern. Whatever the reason, the chairman's problem is the same as when a topic is proposed, viz.: to determine where the material of the book connects with the life experience and interests of the group.

A book or a magazine article is one person's ideas upon some question. Such books or articles are in various forms. Sometimes they give conclusions and support them with argument. At other times they seek to arouse interest and concern in some new problem. Again they give data and point of view on a current question. Some books or articles follow a thinking procedure and lead their readers through a thinking process. Whatever the form of the book or article the first problem is to master its material and determine the questions it discusses. The textbook must then be placed in the setting of the group and its material related to the group's problems and interests.

A textbook must be used and not followed. There is usually more material than can be used. There is much that is not pertinent or of interest to the particular group. The order of the chapters is not sacred. Only so much of the material should be used and in whatever order or combination as will best meet the group thinking procedure.

There are several difficulties in the use of a book or article. There is a tendency for the printed page to carry more weight than it deserves. People seem to feel that what gets printed must be true and the authors must be individuals of authority. A textbook is, in reality, only a printed resource and should

have the same relation as an address which is used as a part of group thinking.

The following is an outline for preliminary study of a text-book or article to be used as the basis of discussion:

1. What is in each chapter or article? Outline its subject matter with main divisions and subdivisions.

2. Note what kind of questions the author is trying to answer. He had a purpose in selecting the particular material as compared to some other material. What was this purpose? List the questions he was trying to answer.

3. Group and summarize the questions with which the chapter or article deals.

4. Note where these summarized questions connect with the life situations and interests of the group. For instance, ask some of the following:

a. In which of the questions would the group members probably be interested? Why?

b. In what actual life situations are the group members facing any of these questions or questions like them? What are the important factors in these situations?

c. What experience or information can be called upon in the group on any of these questions?

5. Glance over (4) and select as the basis of the discussion around which the chapter material would be organized the problem or questions which seem most pertinent to the group.

6. In preliminary fashion explore what proposals the chapter really makes in answer to the main problem and the evidence which the chapter gives.

7. Think of the alternatives to the author's proposals which may be held by members of the group or which might be advocated in other books.

8. Summarize the underlying questions and the contrasting evidence on which the differences between the author's proposal and alternate proposals turn.

CHAPTER VII

PRELIMINARY PLANS FOR CONDUCTING A DISCUSSION

The definiteness with which the chairman will work out his methods of conducting the discussion depends partly upon the situation he is facing and partly upon his experience as a chairman. Sometimes it is necessary for him to be chairman of a discussion without any preliminary opportunity to become acquainted with the particular group and its special situation. In such a case it is necessary for him to depend upon conducting the group in such a way that he and the group together will carry on the exploration of the situation and the defining of the issues, the bringing out of the possible options and their examination, the search for fact and opinion, and the reaching of a conclusion. This takes a longer time for the discussion and usually makes a series of sessions on the question necessary. It has the advantage of having the group enter with the chairman into the entire process. It has the disadvantage of moving more slowly and, therefore, the group may become impatient. There is also a greater possibility of the discussion becoming confused. If a person must take chairmanship of a group without an opportunity for preparation, he should use in the discussion itself the outline of questions which he would have used for the preliminary exploration of the question (see Chap. VI). Where there is to be more than one session, he may decide to lead one discussion with the use of the questions for the exploration of the situation in order to find the interests of the group and its special problems, and then work out more definite outlines for the following sessions.

Even where he has more opportunity for preliminary preparation, a chairman sometimes decides to conduct the discussion as a group study of the question without forecasting the

particular issues. In this case he still uses the type outlines which he himself would have followed in his own preparation, summarizes specific issues as they emerge, and phrases, with the cooperation of the group, specific questions in the course of the discussion. If, from his preliminary study, he is somewhat acquainted with the group and the problem under consideration, he will, of course, cooperate with the group more effectively in this plan. The danger is that the chairman will keep giving the results of his own study and that he will be doing the discussing and deciding himself. The secret of success in this plan is making good summaries, and then asking each next question on the summary. If the summaries are clear, they will carry the discussion.

A second plan is that the chairman phrase questions for each section of the group thinking outline in terms of the particular group he is to lead and its situation. The questions in the exploratory outline are more general and suited to any group. These would be more definite and phrased in relation to the particular question and group. But they must be phrased so they do not determine the thinking of the group but give it full opportunity to do its own thinking and deciding. After he has made his preliminary exploration of the situation, he will phrase questions which he thinks will enable the group members quickly to bring out the elements in the situation and define the problem for themselves. After having seen what some of the possibilities may be and the reasons for each which are likely to be given, and having located various bonds which may unite the group and the chief underlying questions on which it may divide, he will state these various differences in question form. He will be sure that he has questions on all of the probable differences, both as to fact and opinion, even though he may not find that they all emerge in the discussion, and that he is ready with questions so the proposals can be looked at from various points of view. He will be like a quarterback with a number of plays. He tries to be sure that he has phrased questions on the probable lines along which the

discussion might move; but the questions he will use will depend upon the developments in the discussion. His summary questions will have to be phrased in the light of the discussion. He must, of course, modify all these questions to suit the progress of the discussion. If he follows them slavishly he will find they are not useful. But it is easier to modify a question which has been phrased in preliminary fashion than to phrase a question entirely upon the spur of the moment.

A third plan, and one which may be followed by an inexperienced chairman, is to have a complete syllabus of questions worked out in advance. If he has little or no experience he may commence by using a printed syllabus of questions from one of the various usable discussion outlines now available. But he must be sure to get a book prepared by a skilled discussion leader. Books not suited for discussion are sometimes labelled discussion books. Good questions are phrased in such form as will lead to free discussion of the issues rather than to predetermining the conclusions. But even at best, questions prepared in advance determine and limit the areas of discussion and the lines along which it will progress, even though they may not predetermine the conclusions. This third possibility should be the temporary device of the inexperienced leader, used only until he can gain sufficient confidence and skill to move to the second and first plan. The first plan, with possibly some thought about questions in advance, is the ideal method.

It will be seen that these three methods represent three degrees of freedom. Under the first plan, the chairman cooperates with the group as it analyzes its situation, and he and the group together determine issues, introduce data, phrase questions, summarize, come to conclusions. Under the second plan, the chairman cooperates with the group in the analysis of the situation, in the development of issues, but he is ready with questions which with modification enable him to state the issues as they emerge, to ask for information, to lead to the formulation of conclusions. Under the third plan, the questions prepared in advance are followed in the discussion. In the first

type the chairman is ready to cooperate with the group in any line that the discussion may indicate; in the second type he is still able to cooperate with the group along any line the discussion may show desirable, but is ready with some questions which may be used; in the third type he determines the lines along which the thinking of the group will progress even though he does not determine the conclusion.

The third plan sometimes makes both the group and the leader feel more comfortable because the discussion moves smoothly from point to point; though where the group has initiative and independence it will upset, and rightly, the most carefully prepared syllabus. Under the second plan the leader of the group is less likely to become confused. The procedure is more carefully worked out, and yet, with a variety of questions from which to choose, the chairman is reasonably able to follow the leads of the group. The second and first plans throw the maximum of initiative and independence back upon the group and make the chairman to the fullest extent simply a cooperating person who helps the group have a chance to do its own thinking. In groups accustomed to thinking together it can be used more easily than in those to which the group process is unfamiliar.

The most important elements in the conduct of group thinking are summaries and questions. Summarizing cannot be prepared for in advance, for no one can accurately predict what will happen. It has to be learned in the process. Suggestions on summarizing have been given in the chapter on "Chairmanship" (see pp. 67 to 71). While a certain analytical and discriminating mind and reasonable alertness are essential to good questioning, the ability to phrase questions is, in the last analysis, a skill which is acquired. A person can learn to phrase questions well only by phrasing them.

It is true that the question may be used just the same as the spoken word, the printed page, the cartoon, or the advertisement, in order to "put across" a point of view or lead the group to a predetermined conclusion. As already outlined in the dis-

cussion of the Herbartian five steps of teaching, this is the way questions are used in this form of teaching or discussion. The lawyer in his cross-questioning uses questions to lead his witness along so he will say that which the questioner desires. Many a group leader has used questions in this same manner. Hortatory questions in positive form, "Don't you think —," and in negative form, "May it not be —," "Might not —," etc., are suited to the appeal of public address but not to a discussion procedure. Questions in "conscience" form, "Ought not —," are also not suited to discussion. Sometimes a statement in answer to a question is phrased as the question. The discussion leader should avoid all questions asked in such a way as to suggest the answer.

It will be evident at once that the questions differ for the different parts of an outline of a democratic procedure. A different sort of question would be used to get a description of the situation and to open up the issue, from that which would be used in presenting possible courses of action. One kind of question would be used to secure examination of facts and a different kind of question to secure a consideration of points of view. The type of situation or problem being discussed also influences the kind of question used.

Illustrations of Questions

Following are illustrations of questions for various sections of the discussion and for different kinds of problems:

I. GETTING THE SITUATION AND ITS CENTRAL PROBLEM BEFORE THE GROUP

The questions used to open the discussion should be *descriptive* and *report* questions. Their purpose is to "smoke out" the real problems of the group, make them articulate, focus attention on the issue, and prepare for an open-minded, non-argumentative attempt of the group to solve the problem. These questions preferably will be phrased in the third person. The questions of this section are *what* and *why* questions.

The following are some of the types which may be used:

1. If it is a baffling situation or a topic undefined, questions like the following are possible:

What instances or situations do you know where there is race friction (or ——)? Describe ——. Why?

Think of a person who would be considered a success or ——. Why is this person considered a success or ——?

As you think of lawyers, business men, and those in other trades and professions, why do they work at their jobs?

What items might be included in a budget? Which of these are essential to a good life? Which unessential? Why?

Between what countries in Europe is there feeling? Why?

What do people say about the Volstead Act (what attitudes are taken toward it?) Why?

What practices do some people omit on Sunday which they would carry on during the week? What practices are carried on which are omitted during the week? Why?

2. If it is a definite or specific proposal, the discussion is really opened in the section on what to do, but the discussion should be rooted back in terms of the situation.

For instance, if the question is "Should other races be debarred from eating places?" ask what *in the situation* leads this proposal to be made? Why do some advocate it? In what situations is it advocated? In what is it not? What alternative proposals are made? Why?

If the question is "Should young people dance?" ask: Why do they want to dance? Under what circumstances? Who objects? Why?

Such questions lead to an examination of the proposal in its setting and define the issue more definitely.

II. DISCOVERING WHAT TO DO

1. *Getting the Possibilities Suggested and Reasons Understood and Felt.*

These are *search* questions, attempting to draw on experience to discover what is known of similar situations where an at-

tempt was made to solve the problems; what was done and why; and how it worked out. These must include *forecasting* questions, in order to get the group to predict in the light of past experience what is likely to happen, what would be the consequences if this course of action or that were followed; and *reason* questions, bringing out the convictions persons have concerning the various possibilities, why certain individuals believe each might offer an answer to the problem.

The following are examples of these questions with the introductory question which each would follow repeated in italics:

What instances or situations do you know where there is race friction? Describe. Why is there friction?

What proposals are made for the elimination of race friction? Why do people consider each the best way to eliminate friction?

Think of a person who would be considered a success. Why is this person considered a success?

In the discussion thus far, what chief types of successful individuals have been suggested and what are the reasons these are considered successful? What other ideas of success should be considered? Why?

As you think of lawyers, business men, and those in other trades and professions, why do they work at their jobs?

Judging by the discussion thus far, what are the chief reasons persons work at their jobs? What other reasons might prove the motive for life work? Why?

What items might be included in a budget? Which of these are essential to a good life? Which unessential? Why?

From the discussion of a budget, summarize the principal notions as to what are the essentials of a budget if one is to live a good life. What other notions have you found persons held regarding the items in a budget? Why?

Between what countries in Europe is there feeling? Why?

What are the chief suggestions made as to how the friction between European countries might be eliminated and these countries brought to live in greater harmony? Why is each supported?

What do people say about the Volstead Act? Why?

In the light of the attitudes taken toward the Volstead Act, what are the chief proposals as to what should be done about it? Why is each advocated?

What practices do some people omit on Sunday which they would carry on during the week? What practices are carried on on Sunday which are omitted during the week? Why?

On the basis of the practices omitted on Sunday or carried on on Sunday exclusively, what are the chief notions as to the kinds of activities which should be carried on and omitted on Sunday and the chief reasons for these ideas?

2. Recognition of Underlying Agreements and Exploration of the Disagreements.

a. Ask the group to glance over the reasons listed for each possibility and to indicate the matters on which there is agreement. Particularly note any bonds which seem to unite the group in the way of results that all would wish to secure or values that all would wish to conserve. In phrasing all later questions be sure to include these bonds. In order to secure —, what?

b. Ask the group again to glance over the reasons for each possibility and indicate the matters on which there is disagreement. Summarize or state in question form these disagreements. Ask the group which of them are disagreements as to what is true, as to what are really the facts. Having sorted the "fact differences" out from the others, they should be taken up one by one with the questions, What can be done or what steps can be taken to determine what is true, to discover what are the facts? If reliable information is present in the group, the question can be, What really are the facts? On what evidence are they supported?

The questions which involve contrasting points of view, differences of opinion as to what is desirable, or conflicts in value, should be discussed one by one. Be sure that various considerations which people would raise are given full consideration. It may be wise to ask the group what points of view, if any, are not represented in the discussion, and what the

advocates would say. Sometimes the chairman will need to represent these supplementary points of view himself.

c. In some groups it will be found that there are supplementary rather than contrasting points of emphasis which are considered important. Some have the welfare of an organization in mind; some, the well-being of individuals; some a standard of morals. It is sometimes desirable to discuss each separately, leading toward the summary. What course of action will best conserve —? What course of action will conserve —?

These include *exploration* questions, which lead to determination of the facts, verification of the evidence, finding out what is true; *emphasis* questions, which recognize any value or purpose or emphasis, individuals in the group feel is important; and *appraising* questions which lead to an examination of differences of point of view and consideration of the differences.

3. *Reaching a Decision or a Conclusion.*

These questions should be *what* course of action, rather than *which*? In stating the questions for reaching the conclusion, it is necessary to summarize the agreements and disagreements. "We seem to be united in our belief in ——— and in our desire to ———. We are agreed that ———. Our discussion of our disagreements as to ——— seems to bring us to this conclusion. But some of us would like to see ——— at all costs, no matter what the effect upon ——— may be, and others would like to secure ——— even at the sacrifice of ———. *What* course of action will best conserve these two points of emphasis and insure the ——— we all desire?" For example: What course of action will eliminate race friction and at the same time maintain the rightful integrity of the colored race? In order to secure a peaceful and cooperative situation in Europe, what course of action will enable the nations to live together without sacrificing national autonomy or placing the weaker nations under the

domination of the stronger? What course of action will best conserve the growth of the institution, the welfare of the industrial girls, and the best standards for a good Sunday?

Cautions in Regard to Questions

Some cautions and suggestions in regard to questions may be of value. Caution has already been given concerning the hortatory question, which pleads for a particular answer even though the pleading may be in question form. "Might it not —?" "Don't you think —?" "Should not —?"

It is important to distinguish between the questions used in a discussion and the ordinary question and answer of a recitation. In the recitation method the teacher uses questions to discover whether the members of the class have learned certain information which has been set for the lesson. The teacher knows what the correct answer is. He is attempting to determine whether the members of the class know it. These are really then questions within the realm of fact and when the correct answer is received the teacher indicates his approval. Such questions have a place in a discussion only with reference to data which must be placed before the group and even there they are used in a different fashion than in the ordinary question and answer recitation.

Mere *factual* questions, without any indication of the bearing of the facts on the question at issue, are of little use. Note the difference between "What did Washington do?" and "What experience did Washington have in democracy?" *Guessing questions* intended to bring out some point in the mind of the leader of which the group may not be aware, are disconcerting in a discussion. They lead the group members to search around for what the leader wants them to say. What happens when you tell a lie? What must we do before our sins are forgiven? (A little girl said we must sin first.) Who chased whom around the walls of what? These are illustrative.

Self-evident Yes and No questions which demand only assent or dissent should be avoided. Should we love our parents?

Is it desirable to be honest? are representative. These should not be confused with direct questions, which state a real issue and on which some would say "Yes" and others "No," such as, Is dancing to be encouraged? Should the United States join the League of Nations?

Indefinite questions putting things on an indefinite scale are usually not as good as those providing for specific countable answers. In how far —? To what extent —? are not as good as, In what ways —?

Long and involved questions, ones which must be repeated and studied before the meaning is clear, should be avoided.

Questions not phrased in the language of the group are less desirable. Even at the expense of the most classic English, though this will not usually be necessary, the terminology of the group should be followed.

Common faults in question asking are:

Too Many in a Period.—Many a leader who supposedly has a discussion class will ask sixty questions in forty-five minutes. There is little chance for real discussion.

Lecture in Question Form.—The person who thinks he is leading a discussion often simply makes statements and exhortations in question form and lets the group assent.

Lack of Clearness in a Question.—It is so poorly stated and so involved that the leader has to explain and reexplain.

Repeating the Question too Many Times.—The leader should state questions and give the group time to respond before repeating the question.

A question should be penetrating and definite enough to arouse thought, and broad enough to call for even a series of thoughts and comment.

CHAPTER VIII

SUPPLEMENTARY METHODS OF SECURING GROUP DISCUSSION

The usual and perhaps the best method of securing group thinking was considered in the last chapter. Indeed, whatever method of introducing the problem is used, the question is always an essential tool in group thinking. A number of other methods of securing the consideration of any question are possible. One method of opening a discussion is by means of a lecture or address. This is outlined in the chapter on "The Relation of Lectures and Addresses to Group Thinking" (Chap. X). The printed word is sometimes used in place of the spoken word. Preparation for leading a discussion on the basis of a book or article is outlined on pages 100 to 101.

A third method used is the cartoon. In successful cartoons the cartoonist may deal with some current situation concerning which he wishes to raise a question and start folk thinking, or he may try to impress a certain point of view or throw distrust on an opposing point of view. He has a situation with its issue. He raises the question and makes his point by means of the picture. He leaves it to his readers to respond and draw their conclusions. This could be used for opening a discussion in the same way as an address or the chapter of a book.

Another method is the advertisement. If an individual will turn the pages of a magazine until he comes to an advertisement which makes him want to stop and read it, or, when he is driving, if he will stop when he comes to a billboard that interests him, he will usually find that it is an advertisement dealing with a situation and a problem in that situation, which is of either interest or concern to him. The advertiser is very clever in reminding him by means of picture and display type

of this situation and its problem and making it vivid and living for him. The article advertised is then presented as the only or the best answer to this need. It is given associations which will make him well disposed to it, such as a beautiful woman, a home of taste and refinement, a nationally known character. The advertisement of the same article in different types of magazine is shifted to suit the particular situations of the different kinds of readers, and also in different seasons of the year, to suit the varying needs of summer and winter and the festival occasions. Care is taken not to bring confusion by many ideas about the article, for even though the page is costly only one problem and one big point are displayed. In short, the advertisement makes a specific situation with a living problem and proposes one particular article as the solution of the problem. While this method is used for salesmanship, it could be employed to place situations before a group and to open a problem for discussion.

There are other methods, however, better suited to group procedure which will be considered in this chapter.

THE CASE METHOD¹

If the question is one with which those party to the discussion are directly concerned and if they are ready to seek a way out, it is possible to open it directly. If, however, the question is one which concerns the group but which may cause hesitation or embarrassment, or one which the chairman fears will arouse undue emotion, he can make a more indirect approach. Where there is considerable prejudice in a local situation, it is sometimes possible to get fairer discussion if a specific instance or case, in which the issues are similar, is taken from an entirely different setting. For example, on the race question it is sometimes possible to introduce discussion better by taking an instance, if one happens to live in Atlanta, from De-

¹ The book, "And Who Is My Neighbor?" published by The Inquiry is filled with cases of this sort on the racial question. Watson, Goodwin B., and Gladys, in "Case Book for Teachers of Religion," published by Association Press, uses this method for typical religious education situations.

troit, and if one is in the North, from the South. One can be very much more objective about the problems of far-away persons than he can about his own. This is a useful method also for leading the group members to understand and consider situations with which they are not directly in touch.

The chairman can sometimes get the group to furnish the case material and discuss it in the third person. For instance, the discussion on "what makes a person a success" can be opened by asking each member of the group to pick a successful person and then to find out why each one selected is considered a success; or, if it is a matter of personal charm, a group of girls can be asked each to select a woman who is considered particularly charming, and then find why she is considered so. Different types of successful or charming persons will be selected and the difference in the reasons why they are considered successful or charming will bring out the issues regarding success or charm in terms of a third person.

Once the case or instance is before the group the procedure is the same as on any other group thinking process. The presentation of the case makes the opening of the discussion. Then the group discusses why it is of concern or interest, what the issues are, possible ways out, and why each would be advocated, step by step through a group thinking outline.

CASE METHOD WITH MULTIPLE CHOICE

In some instances where the members of the group are likely to jump at a conclusion or where there are points of view which they have never been willing to consider, it is possible to modify the case method by giving not only the instance but also possible attitudes. The situation or question and several possible alternatives are stated. Then the discussion centers around what the course of action should be. If the discussion is to be effective it will be better to commence in the third person; viz., why would some persons take the first choice and some the second. Thus all points of view get fair consideration. If a group commits itself at once, it results in argument.

The following are illustrations:

All of Helen's friends go to some show one night a week at least. Her parents do not approve of this and will not let her go. She is convinced it is all right to go to a good show once in a while. What should Helen do? Why?

1. Should she obey and say nothing?
2. Should she tell her parents what she is doing, and go to a show anyhow, accepting her punishment, if necessary?
3. Should she slip out quietly, telling no one?
4. Should she say she is visiting a friend, but really go to a show with the girls?
5. Should she say nothing until she is big enough to live away from home and do as she pleases?
6. Should she obey, but keep on trying to explain to her parents why she thinks they are wrong?¹

A girl buys a new dress at a very reasonable price, but soon learns that it was produced under terrible sweat shop conditions. What should she do? Why?

1. Should she return the dress and say nothing?
2. Should she report this to the police?
3. Should she start an educational crusade among her friends against such conditions?
4. Should she write a letter to her Congressman?
5. Should she do nothing this time, but resolve never to buy at that place again?
6. Should she go to the proprietor, protest, and demand her money back?¹

If a storekeeper gives back too much change, what should a person do?

1. Tell him he made a mistake?
2. Go out and say nothing about it—spend the money for candy?
3. Keep the money and give it to the Christmas fund?
4. Tell your mother how clever you were?²

If you have been bored at a party what should you say to the hostess when leaving? Why?

¹ From Watson, Goodwin B., "Tests of Ethical Judgment."

² See Watson, G. B., "Experiments With Religious Education Tests," p. 17.

1. That you had a delightful time?
2. Just say "good-bye" and nothing more?
3. That you had a very sad time?
4. That you hope she won't invite you again?¹

TRUE-FALSE TEST

The true-false test was devised for use in examinations, but it has proven quite useful as a method of opening discussion. The true-false method is to list certain statements which are to be marked true or false. If you are going to use this device in discussion you must have them marked twice according to the conflicting criteria or standards which are to be discussed. Which of these are true according to the standards of capital? Which of these are true according to the standards of labor? Which are true and which false according to commonly accepted standards of the day? Which would be true and which false according to the standards of Jesus? The method is illustrated in the following outline for a discussion on "Getting Even" or "Retaliation."²

1. Mark "true" before those of the following statements which you consider true according to the *commonly accepted standard* in your community, and "false" before those of the following statements which you think the *commonly accepted standard* in your community would not approve.

a. In a game, clean playing ought to be the rule, but if an opponent persists in slugging, unseen by the referee he ought not to be allowed to get away with it. A fellow has a right to look for his chance to even up.

b. If a business competitor gives you a dirty deal, and you have a chance to get even, you should seek instead an opportunity to do him a double kindness in return.

c. A criminal ought to be made to pay or suffer in proportion to his crime. He should not be set free until he has paid full penalty.

d. Measures of retaliation on the part of the labor union or the employer during a strike are not justifiable; the labor union

¹ See "Experiments with Religious Education Texts," p. 17.

² This is based upon Elliott, H. S., "How Jesus Met Life Questions," Chap. VI.

or the employer should seek a chance to do a kindness to their opponents in return for any drastic measures taken by them to defeat them.

e. If a man has been wronged by another, he is yellow if he does not retaliate. A person with any kind of manhood would do so.

f. The Treaty of Versailles was right in requiring Germany to pay in proportion to her responsibility for the war. Retaliation on the part of the Allies in attempting to make Germany pay up in proportion to her responsibility for the war was entirely justified. A peace treaty cannot be expected to show mercy—it must mete out punishment.

2. Check the statements above of particular interest to you.

3. The question is: "How would a person's standard differ if he sought to follow the ideal of Jesus instead of currently accepted practice?" To discover the ideal of Jesus, examine Matt. 5: 29-48.

a. Note that the old Mosaic law was an eye for an eye. Under this law, how far could a man go in getting even for a wrong? How is this different from our common practice today?

b. Note Jesus' insistence upon giving at least twice as much good to the man who has done wrong—second mile, other cheek, cloak also. According to Jesus' standard, how would a man get even with a man who has done him an injury?

c. Note that according to the standards of Jesus' day you could hate your enemy. Is that allowed today? What was Jesus' idea on the treatment of a person who was your enemy?

4. On the basis of 3, summarize Jesus' ideas as to how a person should get even.

5. With Jesus' standard in mind reread the true-false statements above and at the *right* mark "true" after those you feel would be true *according to the standard and viewpoint of Jesus*, and "false" after those you think would be false according to the standard and viewpoint of Jesus.

6. In which of the above is Jesus' standard at variance with that commonly practiced? Why?

7. Would it be desirable to follow the standard of Jesus in the issues under consideration? What would be likely to be the result if Jesus' standard were followed? Would it let persons get away with murder or would it really work? How would it probably compare in its results with the "eye for an eye" method? Why do you think so?

8. In which of the true-false situations above do you feel it would be practicable to embody the viewpoint of Jesus? In which impracticable? Why?

9. On the statement in which you are most concerned, what steps would be necessary to put Jesus' standard into effect?

The following is an illustration of the "true-false" method as applied to an economic discussion.¹ It will be noticed that these statements both open up problems and demand examination of fact and opinion in their solutions. The following are selected from the total list and deal with one aspect of the question, namely, the production of goods and its bearing upon human welfare.

1. Mark "true" in front of those which you think would be defended as true and "false" in front of those which would be defended as untrue. Then give your reasons for thinking each would be considered true or false.

a. The workers would work harder if their greater production lowered the cost of goods so a greater number of families could have the conveniences of life.

b. Production for use will secure more goods than production for profit.

c. The chief reason a worker fails to work at capacity is because no matter how hard he works he still has to struggle for subsistence while the boss grows richer and richer.

d. The more efficient the production in industry, the less can human welfare be considered.

e. Increased production automatically brings a higher standard of living.

¹ From "Christianity and Economic Problems." Chap. VIII.

f. The comfort of the workers cannot be put first because without the pressure of need the worker would refuse to work.

g. The protection of the health of the worker would pay dividends to the employer.

h. In the interest of a better economic order we should demand that industry find the way to produce more goods without sacrificing the welfare of the worker.

2. Be sure the data from the chapter dealing with each statement are introduced into the discussion. Summarize and consider carefully the differences of point and view which emerge.

3. In the light of the discussion what changes, if any, would you make in your first "true-false" markings? Why?

LADDER TEST

The ladder test introduces different levels and leads to a discussion of the level which is desirable. The following is an illustration of this test in relation to income.

1. At which of the following levels do you think it would be most desirable for a family with three children to live?¹

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| <i>g.</i> Extravagance | \$30,000 per year |
| <i>f.</i> Luxury | 15,000 per year |
| <i>e.</i> Plenty | 8,000 per year |
| <i>d.</i> Enough for complete living..... | 5,600 per year |
| <i>c.</i> Reasonable comforts | 3,500 per year |
| <i>b.</i> Health and decency..... | 2,500 per year |
| <i>a.</i> Bare subsistence..... | 1,700 per year |

2. Which is the level below which it would be held that no person should live? Why?

3. Which is the level above which it would be held that no person should live? Why?

4. Which, if any, of the levels of living are inconsistent for a Christian? Why?

5. What is the desirable upper and lower level of living? Why?

¹See "Christianity and Economic Problems." Chap. V. The amounts are illustrative. If such a test were used, the amounts should be based upon the most recent and reliable estimates of living costs.

ITEMS TEST

In an items test, all the things which are suggested are listed, and the discussion considers which should be included and which should be eliminated. The following illustration is from a budget :

The following detailed budget was suggested as "enough for complete living."¹

| | |
|--|-------|
| Housing (semi-detached house with reasonable yard) | \$900 |
| Wages (one maid, with additional service for washing) . . | 750 |
| Fuel and light | 250 |
| Food (including ice) | 1,500 |
| Clothing | 500 |
| Personal equipment (other than clothing) | 50 |
| Household equipment | 100 |
| Telephone | 50 |
| Education (in a good private school) | 500 |
| Doctor, medicines, and nursing | 200 |
| Carfare and travel (other than vacation) | 150 |
| Reading and recreation (other than vacation) | 100 |
| Vacation (one month at seashore or mountains) | 200 |
| Insurance (life insurance not included) | 75 |
| Inexpensive automobile (original cost included and apportioned over life of car) | 300 |

Which items would be questioned? Why? Which would be considered essential? Why? What, if any, would be added? Why?

RANKING

The following is an illustration of a method of ranking for opening a discussion :

Below are described some ways in which people have tried to make a success of life. Rank them in order of greatness, or success from the commonly accepted standard of people you know. Place 1 before the one which would be put first, 2 before the one which would be put next, etc. Why would they be put in this order?²

¹Published in "The World Tomorrow." Nov., 1921.

²Watson, Goodwin B., "Tests of Ethical Judgment."

a. A man invents a new sort of reaper which increases the efficiency of the farmers. He charges a good price for it, and soon accumulates a liberal fortune. He contributes generously to churches, schools, hospitals, and other good causes.

b. A woman gives up her interest and career in the drama, marries a business man in a suburban city, and gives herself to caring for a home, giving birth to, and training, four children who are among the finest citizens.

c. A Japanese Buddhist studies medicine, and, feeling the call of their need, goes to spend his life with lepers on an isolated island.

d. A man becomes a minister in a town of 10,000 people where there are twenty-five churches, draws to him a respected and well-to-do congregation, makes no enemies, and spends his life in comfort and quiet, serving these people.

e. A scientist discovers a new kind of poison gas which is so powerful that it can kill off the population of whole cities within a few moments. He turns it over to the government and is given great honor, as well as an income more than adequate for the rest of his life.

f. A brilliant young man chooses the law for his profession and in time, is chosen to look after the interests of a large railroad. He handles their damage claims, winning 90 per cent of his cases for his company.

g. A young man goes to college, makes the varsity team, is elected captain of both baseball and football in his senior year, becomes coach at the college, and finally accepts a call to a great university, in which he has established a reputation for winning more games than does any other coach in the country. He is paid more than is the university president.

h. A very able girl becomes a teacher, goes into a small town to teach high-school English, and although she has other offers, remains there, taking an active part in church and social life in the community, but giving herself mainly to the high-school students, most of whom count her among their best friends.

i. A business man becomes convinced that a new order is needed in business life, so he turns over his factory to his employees, letting them elect their own officers, and spends the rest of his life on a level with these employes, serving as manager, or in any other position to which they elect him.

Now rerank them in the order of greatness or success on the

basis of the kind of a life you think should be considered greatest or the most successful.

What changes are there in the ranking? Why?

What should be considered best? Why?

DISCRIMINATION TESTS¹

The discrimination tests are statements made about current questions on which people may differ and the test gives an opportunity to place oneself on a scale indicating whether the statement is "certainly true," "probably true," "doubtful," "probably false," or "certainly false." The list is first filled out by all in the group and the results summarized, preferably on a blackboard. This indicates the number in the group who have placed themselves in each position in regard to the various statements. The questions on which there is general agreement would not be discussed, but those on which persons disagreed, some saying it is "certainly true," and others "certainly false," would become the basis of discussion. Questions on which a majority were doubtful, if they were questions of real interest, would also be discussed. The discussion could be on one statement. If several statements are used, they should be arranged in a group thinking order. The following are illustrations:

STATEMENTS ON FAMILY LIFE²

| <i>Cer- tainly true</i> | <i>Prob- ably true</i> | <i>Doubt- ful</i> | <i>Prob- ably false</i> | <i>Cer- tainly false</i> | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (1) The monogamous family is the foundation stone of our present social order. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (2) Men and women should share equally in the initiative of finding and choosing mates. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (3) There is only one valid cause for divorce—unfaithfulness. |

¹ This form of test was devised by Dr. Goodwin B. Watson and issued first in his "Measurement of Fair Mindedness."

² See Preliminary Outline, "The Family in the Life of Today." Prepared by the Family Commission National Board Y. W. C. A.

PROCESS OF GROUP THINKING

| <i>Cer- tainly true</i> | <i>Prob- ably true</i> | <i>Doubt- ful</i> | <i>Prob- ably false</i> | <i>Cer- tainly false</i> | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (4) Every wife ought to be a good cook. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (5) Every woman wants a career as well as a family. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (6) No girl can expect to be popular today who doesn't "pet." |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (7) It is better to be unhappily married than not to be married at all. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (8) Nothing excuses women having sex relations outside of marriage. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (9) A woman should take her husband's name at marriage. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (10) A woman should have as many children as God sends her. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (11) Every girl who desires a husband and a home may have them. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (12) The large number of intelligent unmarried women to-day is a commentary on what marriage has to offer. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (13) A husband and wife should think alike on all vital questions. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (14) In the interest of eugenics certain standards should be complied with before a marriage license is granted. |

MISCELLANEOUS STATEMENTS¹

| <i>Cer- tainly true</i> | <i>Prob- ably true</i> | <i>Doubt- ful</i> | <i>Prob- ably false</i> | <i>Cer- tainly false</i> | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (1) The churches are more sympathetic with capital than with labor. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (2) The modern laxness in the observation of Sunday is, on the whole, harmful to the best interests of people. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (3) No other religion will ever replace Christianity. |

¹Watson, Goodwin B., "The Measurement of Fair Mindedness."

| <i>Cer- tainly true</i> | <i>Prob- ably true</i> | <i>Doubt- ful</i> | <i>Prob- ably false</i> | <i>Cer- tainly false</i> | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (4) The Christian church acts as an opiate, preventing action toward the removal of social injustice. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (5) Reformers generally pass laws to keep others from doing things they themselves would secretly like to do. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (6) Dancing is harmful to the morals of young people. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (7) The movies are seriously impairing the morals of American children. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (8) A girl who smokes cigarettes becomes coarser and less worthy of esteem. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (9) No respectable person chews gum in public. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (10) Foreigners who work in our mines or factories should be paid on the basis of the same standard of living which we would set for American homes. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (11) If all the money of the country were divided up equally among the people, within five years most of the wealth would be controlled by a few, while the masses would be poor. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (12) Destruction of life and property during some labor struggles is due largely to the influence of dangerous radicals, often foreigners. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (13) Profit sharing is a desirable method of improving industrial conditions today in a great majority of the corporations of the United States. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (14) The American laboring man ought to be the most contented in the world. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (15) Destruction of life and property during some labor struggles is due largely to gunmen hired by employers. |

A similar type of test provides discrimination by the words "all," "most," "many," "few," "no." The members of the group are asked to underscore those which they believe to be true. The report of the opinion of the group is made and summarized as in the case of the other discrimination tests, and discussion is on those statements on which there is the greatest difference. The following is an example:

| <i>All</i> | <i>Most</i> | <i>Many</i> | <i>Few</i> | <i>No</i> | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|---|
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (1) colored people should go to schools, hotels, theaters, etc., patronized exclusively by colored people. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (2) white people feel some antagonism toward Japanese or Chinese people. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (3) persons of pure Nordic stock are superior in intelligence to Negroes. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (4) nationalities should be allowed to come into this country freely with no immigration barriers. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (5) phases of white, western civilization, are superior to the civilization of China. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (6) small children who have not been prejudiced by others, will play with children of other races, quite unconscious of racial differences. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (7) persons of one race should be permitted, with mutual consent, to marry persons of another race. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (8) colleges should admit pupils without regard to race distinctions. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (9) churches should be as open to people of one race as to those of another. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | (10) Jews will try to get the best of a bargain, if they have to cheat to do it. |

PICTURE AND FEELING TEST

In releasing prejudice and at the same time securing discussion, the use of word tests can be employed. For instance, on

race, write the name of a race on the board—Jew, Negro, etc. Ask the members of your group to write down immediately the first word that comes into their minds. Then get them to try to find out how this happened to come to mind; what is the source of their feeling; what makes the difference between the favorable pictures and the unfavorable ones which flash into people's minds; how far their reasons are justified by the facts, how far simply by emotional bias. The same test can be used in regard to industrial questions by writing "capitalist," "labor unionist," "strike breaker," "piece work," "foreign labor." In each case, the words on which there is a strong emotion or prejudice would be included and the discussion would center on those in which there was either the most emotion or the widest difference in the feelings expressed. This method need not be illustrated further, but it is at once evident that it could be used on religious questions, international questions, political issues.¹

Another method of word test is to present a list of words common in any area of life and see which of those would be crossed out as bringing disagreeable or unpleasant feelings. This test was devised by Dr. Watson and the first form is in his "Tests of Fair Mindedness." Other modifications have been made on industrial and race questions.² The point of the discussion is to determine why these words bring disagreeable or unpleasant feelings.

SOCIAL DISTANCE TEST

The Social Distance test was developed by Prof. E. S. Bogardus. The test as given below is an adaptation.³

1. According to commonly accepted standards of people you know, they would willingly admit members of each nationality

¹ For further illustration of this, see Discussion I. "What Makes Up My Mind on International Questions," prepared by The Inquiry.

² See "What Makes Up My Mind on International Questions" and "Preliminary Outline on Family Life," prepared by The Commission on the Family in the Life of Today.

³ See Discussion III. "What Makes Up My Mind on International Questions."

(as a class, and not the best you have known nor the worst members) to one or more of the relationships under which you have placed a cross. (Note that the crosses may be put in any number of the six columns.) Why would they make the answers you have indicated?

| | 1 To citizenship in the United States | 2 To my church as full members | 3 To the street where I live as neighbors | 4 To my employment as fellow workers | 5 To my home as personal chums | 6 To close kinship by marriage |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Belgians | | | | | | |
| British | | | | | | |
| Chinese | | | | | | |
| Czechs | | | | | | |
| French | | | | | | |
| Germans | | | | | | |
| Italians | | | | | | |
| Japanese | | | | | | |
| Mexicans | | | | | | |
| Poles | | | | | | |
| Russians | | | | | | |

2. What change, if any, do you think should be made for a wholesome social life? Why?

CONTRASTED STATEMENTS

Another variation in method is to use contrasting statements, placed upon a blackboard, which represent two points of view, and demand data for their defense or attack. The following is an illustration of contrasted statements as the introduction to a discussion on nationalism.

With which of the following statements do you agree?
Why?

The idea of the nation is one of the most powerful anæsthetics that man has invented. Under the influence of its fumes the whole people can carry out its systematic program of the most virulent self-seeking without being in the least aware of its moral perversion—in fact feeling dangerously resentful if it is pointed out.

The first duty of the state is to guard the interests of its own citizens, and it is only when the interests of its citizens are identical with the interests of all mankind that the policy of a state can be human without being self-destructive.

CHAPTER IX

THE PLACE OF INFORMATION AND THE EXPERT IN GROUP THINKING

The most common criticism of group discussion is the fact that people attempt to discuss a question without knowing anything about it. The criticism is frequently justified. Too often discussions are carried on without facts and without regard to the place of the expert. The more limited the education and experience of people, the more are they willing to discuss any question without reference to facts and to decide questions on opinion unsupported by evidence.

There must be no misunderstanding as to the attitude toward information taken by those who believe there are possibilities worth exploring in group thinking. To pool the suggestions of the ignorant does not result in a reliable and intelligible decision. Discussions should not be carried on without the necessary information and there is no question as to the difficulty of making available adequate data. The inference, however, is hardly well taken, that none but those already well informed have a right to discuss a question and that most of the issues are too difficult for the rank and file of people and must be turned over to the experts. Indeed there is a certain degree of humor in the statement sometimes heard, that nobody must discuss questions or come to decisions without complete information and adequate data. The truth is that, with the limitations of this world, no question was ever decided on complete information. With due recognition of the importance of securing as adequate information as possible, the decisions of life are made with as reliable information as can be secured under the circumstances. We must not deceive ourselves by believing that we ever act on complete knowledge and understanding of the facts.

The difficulty with the critics of group discussion is in their assumption that every person must be informed *before* he commences to consider a question. This assumption fails to recognize how a person becomes well informed and the place of information in thinking and action. While recognizing that the better informed a group is on any particular topic, the more likely it is to have at once available the necessary data on any specific issue, still the crux of the matter in a group is not whether it has the information but whether it is willing to take the steps to secure it. While recognizing that the greater the understanding of any particular field, the more perspective the group will have, still what is needed in any discussion is not all the information on the topic but reasonably adequate data pertinent to the particular question.

Information, to be valuable, is information on something. It must be related to the life of the individual in some way, otherwise a store of information would consist of cold unrelated facts with no meaning or significance and never could be used in life. Therefore, regarding the complaint that people cannot profitably discuss until they are informed, it must be said that people cannot become informed except in relation to some interest or concern of life. The truth is that, in practice, information is secured item by item as it is needed in life. It is possible to store up information in advance of an experience in proportion as one understands through past experience what the new situation will demand. It is possible in the course of experience to stop and search for information. As information is gained in one experience after another, a person's store of information becomes more and more adequate until eventually he may become a reasonably intelligent person in some realm; but the intelligence comes because the information has been secured as it was needed and used.

There is no such thing as information in general. It is always information about something. When people do not have facts enough to decide the League of Nations' question intelligently it is not because they have failed to study interna-

tional affairs in general and cannot pass a general examination upon them; but because they do not know sufficient facts bearing upon the League of Nations decision. The important factor is knowledge of such facts as bear directly upon this issue. Indeed they might have taken a long course on international affairs, most of which would have rather remote bearing on the League decision and add little to their intelligence in the discussion of this issue. It is much more reasonable to gather the facts as one is working upon the problem, and in relation to that problem, than to browse around for facts in general.

When a more specific example is used, the fallacy of the assumption regarding information is evident. It would be admittedly preposterous to say that a person could not commence planning a particular trip unless he had made a general study of methods of transportation and of geography and until he was generally informed on all routes, trains, etc. What a person does is to gather the necessary facts for the first travel decision. The facts gained by this experience become his possession for the next decision; and he gathers whatever additional facts are necessary. He becomes an intelligent traveler when he has faced enough of these specific situations to have a wide range of experience and to have gathered a reasonable body of data. Had he studied the whole question of traveling in general, in advance, he would discover, when facing an actual decision as to travel, that many of the facts were useless and that many useful ones he had forgotten.

Another reason that securing information as it is needed and can be put to use is the more effective method, is because more is involved than simply knowing the useful facts. The ability to use them and to bring them to bear upon situations is still more important. The mind works by the law of association. The connection in which information has been secured is the relation in which it will be most easily recalled. In this regard the information in the mind seems to be like information in a file. Just as the individual does not

know where to look for material stored away in the file unless it is under the headings to which he would naturally turn, so information stored in the mind is lost unless connected up with actual life questions and filed under use categories. Useful information frequently cannot be found when it is needed in a life situation. The chance of finding the material again depends not only on its being in the file; but upon its being at a place where one would naturally look for it. The mind is not a marvelous magician who can pick from the whole store of information, wherever and however they may have been stored away, the facts pertinent to the immediate need. The problem becomes not only one of having acquired information, but having acquired it in such a way that it is available for use in connection with practical problems. Information is simply stored-up data and experience. It represents what has been secured on any particular question by experience and study to date.

Information beyond that already possessed by the members of a group may be necessary at any or every stage of the group process. More information may be needed on the situation and its problem, concerning new proposals which are suggested by the group, to verify disagreements as to fact or to bring in new viewpoints, or in relation to ways and means. The important consideration, then, is not whether the group has the information before it commences to consider a question, but whether it has the facilities for securing this information in the course of the discussion.

This information is made available in different ways. It may be found in the direct personal experience of the group members, *i. e.*, the group as a whole may be in the midst of the situation it is trying to face. It may come through actual personal visits or investigations by members of the group. If they can see a situation with the help of people who are already familiar with it, they may learn as much in a short time as by long, undirected observation. A member of the group may have the information and tell it to the other members of the

group. A person from the outside who has had the experience or the information may be imported. It may come through reading or movies, stereopticon or exhibits. It may be direct experience or vicarious experience. It is frequently possible to combine these two. The group may pool whatever information it has about the situation and then come to see it in its larger setting through reading, movies, or addresses made by speakers who compare the present situation with similar ones faced by other groups. The same is true in the discussion of what to do. The experience of the group may throw a certain amount of light upon the facts and upon the considerations to be weighed, but persons with experience in other groups may be brought in to present new points of view. It is desirable that information represent a record of living experience, whether that experience be scientific investigation or social exploration. The facts needed are the facts wrought out in life and bearing upon life.

This makes necessary a consideration of the place of the expert. In a democratic process he is not the person who, because of his knowledge of the facts, is supposed to tell the group what to think and do. It is incumbent upon him to make these facts available to the people in such form that they may intelligently decide what they wish to do. He is to put himself alongside of the members of the group to share his expert knowledge as it is needed in the process.

Professor William A. McCall has illustrated this in relation to interior decorating. There are two ways to use an expert in interior decorating. One is to say to him, "You know about decorating; tell us how to decorate this home." In that case, the expert decorates it in the way which suits him, and it may not suit the taste of the persons who live in the home. The other use of the expert is to ask him to help in an intelligent decision as to how the home is to be decorated. He knows color combinations, what effects will be secured by this or that type of decoration, and prices. He can make available to the members of the home the possibilities in decoration and

can let them see what the effect of each will be. Then they are in a position to make their own decision. "This is the way it is done" or "It is never done this way" are the death of initiative and originality. Whether it suits the taste of the expert makes no difference, provided he has made available to the persons involved the basis for an intelligent decision.

This relation of the expert was well illustrated in Prof. William H. Kilpatrick's participation in a Boys' Work Assembly. Immediate specific questions of membership, program, and tests were being decided. These involved certain expert data of psychology as to how character is formed; what is the effect of incentives; how purposes are formed and the place they play in conduct. Professor Kilpatrick made no effort whatever to suggest to the group what they ought to decide. He did listen to the discussions and in special addresses as well as incidentally in the discussion made available such expert information from experimental education as bore upon the immediate issues being discussed and was necessary to an intelligent decision of these questions. The assembly made up its own mind, but it made it up in the light of expert information.

Perhaps it is unkind to suggest that the expert sometimes imparts his information in terms unintelligible to the rank and file of people and in a form which he can alone use, in order to keep his domination in life. As a matter of fact, his information is not so difficult to understand if he will translate his technical terminology into everyday terms. When he does this he makes available to the group the information they need in making a decision.

The expert has a double function. He is used in advance of the democratic meeting to gather the necessary information and to put it in such form as will make it available for the discussion. He follows up the meeting by cooperating with the group in carrying out its will. At the time disarmament was first proposed, experts in national defense insisted that the world could not be carried on without armies. The *New York Evening Post* had an editorial in which it said that the

experts in attempting to dictate to the people as to what they should and could do were missing their function. Said this editorial:

The experts have shown the world how to arm as a means of defense because the people wanted the world armed. If the people want the world disarmed and want affairs handled without war, it is the business of the expert to find ways and means of carrying out the public will.

This states clearly the second function of the expert; viz., the responsibility of cooperating in discovering ways and means of putting into effect conclusions arrived at.

In certain areas of life the democratic process involves simply the choice of the expert into whose hands the situation shall be entrusted. This is true of highly technical realms, such as medicine and sanitation. But even here the experts disagree and choice of the expert involves knowledge of what each expert claims. In all areas of life, therefore, the decisions in the last analyses are made by those whom they affect, and all the expert can do is to put his knowledge and skill at their disposal. What is needed is ability more effectively to use the expert and his data. Group thinking is a process in which the expert and expert information may be effectively utilized.

CHAPTER X

THE RELATION OF LECTURES AND ADDRESSES TO GROUP THINKING

An individual who employed discussion in connection with academic teaching was asked whether, if his ideal were adopted, there would be any lectures at all in the classroom teaching of the institution. It is true that under a so-called lecture method, frequently no opportunity is given for discussion; but lectures may be a fruitful and dynamic part of group thinking. The attempt to put lectures over against discussions shows a misunderstanding of what is involved in discussion.

In a complete group thinking process, a lecture is built into the group thinking, and is followed by discussion. Lectures are used to supply data. We have already noted that in a thorough process of group thinking, attention must be given to scientific data; the experience of others or of the past is used; information must be available. Sometimes we find such data available in books, again experience is embodied in persons, who are willing in lectures or in addresses to open the pages of their experience at those chapters where the data are most pertinent. To read experience in books is quicker; it is easier to compare the experience of various persons in a library than it is to bring those persons into a group. The experience of persons of the past and of people far distant may be made available through the printed page. There is, however, a certain magnetic quality in the presentation of this experience by the person who has had it which gives glow and reality beyond that found in books. Further, the persons giving such experience can be questioned, as books in the library cannot, so as to understand the meaning, so as to query the point of view, and so as to correct false impressions. Consequently, the lecture may be usefully employed in a group thinking process.

Certainly, in group thinking there is no place for the lecture, sermon, or public address in which the speaker assumes to do the entire thinking for the group. Such a use of the lecture is a denial of the purpose of group thinking. In such lectures, information is introduced only as it supports the position of the speaker; appeal is made to prejudice and bias; the speaker seeks only to win the audience to the acceptance of his point of view and the results of his thinking. This is a form of emotional propaganda. It puts the people at the mercy of the demagogue, whether he be well or ill intentioned. The question is, then, not one of lecturing or not lecturing. It is rather: when and how to lecture. If lectures are to be effective they must be integrated directly with the group process.

A caution must be added. It is easy for a group to turn to some more experienced person for an answer to their problem as a substitute for their own consideration of it; and, pleased by this appeal to him, it is easy for the experienced person to attempt to answer it. All that has been said about the necessity of a group doing its own thinking and coming to its own conclusion is valid. Lecture must be so employed as to contribute to group thinking. It may easily become a substitute for such thinking by the group.

Speakers, accustomed to making addresses without interruption and without an opportunity for their conclusions to be questioned, often find a relationship to discussion very disconcerting. On the other hand, persons who have conducted open forums, or who have cooperated with students in their academic teaching, more easily adapt themselves to this democratic method. It demands that the expert shall have mastered his material in relation to its use so that he knows how to select it and bring it to bear upon a problem. This requires a thorough mastery of a field and practice in applying it to specific situations.

Often in actual practice the lecture is given first. If there is any questioning or discussion, it follows the lecture. This

means that the lecturer sets the problems, tells what is important to him, takes control of the discussion. It is the situation as he is facing it, and not the problem of the group, which is considered. In a democratic process the relationship is reversed. The lecturer comes to make available information for the group on their problems. The group sets the problems, determines that on which they wish information, in short, determines that about which the lecturer shall speak. This requires that the lecturer shall be willing to select from the range of his experience that which is pertinent to the problems before the group and that he shall introduce this information at such time and in such ways as will be most useful to the group. Lecture may be used in each step of a group thinking process. Some illustrations may make more clear the ways in which lectures or addresses may be used in relation to group thinking.

Placing Immediate Problems in their Wider Setting

Out of the larger experience of the lecturer, he is sometimes able to bring to the group instances of the problem in areas of life with which the members are unfamiliar or to let them see the bearing of the immediate situation upon other aspects of life. If the group members see their immediate situation in its wider setting and understand some of the larger significance of what they are doing, it both illuminates their immediate situation and adds to their interest in the problem. This being true, it is generally better to have discussion first, in order to secure all the group experience, and then use the lecture or address to enlarge that experience and place it in its wider setting. For instance, at a discussion on the racial question, there were present a member of the Negro race, one of the Jewish race, and a person with experience in the Orient. After the discussion had gone as far as the personal experience of the group would take it, these persons placed the immediate racial questions in their larger setting and their wider implications. A group of religious workers were discussing boys'

work in America. Through the presentations of certain persons from other lands, they came to see their immediate problems in their relation to boys' work and boy attitudes in other countries. The problems of students in one country frequently take on added meaning when compared with similar problems students are facing in other countries.

Opening Problems Not Felt by the Group

Sometimes a speaker is able, because of his wider experience, to bring vividly to the attention of a group problems the significance of which has escaped their notice. They may be living in the midst of racial, industrial, or other problems but have become so accustomed to these that they cause them no concern. On the other hand, they may not know what really is involved. At the Student Volunteer Convention, at Indianapolis, the opening speakers on race, industry, and international affairs, through their personal experience, made alive for the students problems which they had faced but the significance of which they had not so fully understood. Such presentations are effective only if the members of the group have some experience on the issue. The speaker simply enlarges, enriches, and intensifies that experience.

Suggesting New Possibilities of Action

At times some individual has experience in working out a course of action or is acquainted with some experiment. Since it is unfamiliar to the group, the speaker is given time to present this proposal more fully that it may be considered along with other possibilities suggested by members of the group.

Furnishing Data Essential to the Solution of the Problem

We have found that in the discussion of any question the issue frequently turns on fact, *i.e.*, on what is true. It is possible to investigate personally through reading and research and secure these facts, but at times in a discussion it is useful

to use experts who personalize in their study and experience the information which is necessary. At a student convention there developed, in a discussion on race, wide disagreement as to the extent of racial differences. The students would have listened most eagerly to any speaker or speakers who would have made available the best scientific information. Even in the pressure of the convention, students went to the library to find what the facts really were. At a conference on international questions, the extent to which propaganda is used in connection with war to misinform the public became a question of information and a man thoroughly acquainted with the public information service of the various governments was able to make available facts which the delegates did not have. A group of girls in discussing the question of petting came to the place where the issue turned on certain scientific information regarding sex, as to whether petting was physically harmful, as to the habit-forming effect of such sex practices, and as to the relation of sex to personality. Such information could be secured by a wide range of reading, but the facts most pertinent to the problem at hand were not collected at any place and some of the information was not yet available in books. Therefore, lecture became the most effective method of making this information available. It did not settle the question of petting; it gave data only on questions of fact on which the solution of the question turned.

Experts are sometimes brought in to sit on the side lines during the discussion so that they may be called upon when their information is needed. They do not come to decide the questions but simply to present relevant facts. They are appealed to by the chairman or members of the group. If, upon any question, such persons feel they have facts which are relevant, they may make the suggestion that these facts should be taken into consideration. They will be useful in such a discussion in proportion as they are able to handle facts with entire fairness and without attempt to bias the discussion one way or another.

*Presentation of a Point of View by One Whose Experience
Is Recognized as Significant*

Lecture or address is sometimes used when a group wishes opportunity to hear more at length the point of view or the suggested solution of persons who have had especially significant experience in relation to the problem in hand. A group considering the Korean-Japanese question asked that two persons who had had actual experience in Japan and Korea should be secured, one who was pro-Japanese and the other pro-Korean. The members of this group were ready with discriminating questions. They made no attempt to heckle the speakers. They wanted to know why one person was pro-Japanese and why the other was pro-Korean, and they wanted the strongest presentation that could be made for each side so that they could compare the evidence. Following these presentations they discussed the question further in their own group. They could not have listened as intelligently without the discussion in advance and they would not have followed up the addresses intelligently had they not been integrated with a democratic process. In a class on work with individuals, differences in methods of personal counseling were presented to the class by individuals who personalized in their experience these opposing practices and points of view. Each was asked to present his experience in as convincing manner as possible. The attitude of the class was to discover what each had to contribute to a working practice with individuals.

Some of the most able preachers of the present day, whether consciously or unconsciously, follow somewhat this procedure. Usually the sermon of each deals with some question of concern to the members of the congregation. Frequently, it is a question out of current life on which those present are taking or must take an attitude. The sermon presents the situation, discusses the possibilities, attempts to give the reasons for varying points of view, presents material from the Scriptures and from Christian history which would give the basis for a

Christian decision. Then, as one of them said one day in a sermon concerning a very much discussed question, "You may care to know my own conviction regarding it. It is just one person's point of view but may be of interest to you." He then stated his own viewpoint. The purpose of such a presentation is at once evident. It is to give a basis for the members of the congregation to do their own thinking by making the issues clear and by presenting data. Such a person is one who is sharing experience with others in the hope that they may in turn grow thereby, rather than one who is simply attempting to put over a point of view. Even under these conditions, the sermon fails of its highest usefulness because there is no opportunity for discussion. With no opportunity to work out one's conclusion there is danger that the question will be forgotten as soon as the person leaves the church. This is the reason a few ministers are giving opportunity for questions and discussion following the sermon or in an after meeting. If the minister can choose his sermon from the life problems of his members and in relation to other sections of the program of the church, then his sermon becomes his testimony on questions important in the work of the church and in the life situations of its members.

Suggestions on Ways and Means

In carrying out certain methods of work or putting into effect certain practices, an individual may have had particularly notable experience. In that case he may be invited to present more at length ways and means. In this he simply makes available through description and for the use of the group the wide experience he has had. These are addresses in the realm of method and are effective as a part of a democratic process.

Discussion of a Lecture or Address

There remains a consideration of a second use of lectures in relation to discussion; viz., where the lectures or addresses are

thrown open for discussion. In gatherings accustomed to lectures and addresses this is sometimes the first step toward complete group thinking. Often a person, interested in securing participation by his audience, is asked to make an address. To lead a discussion under these circumstances arouses opposition in the group; but he can give his address in such a way that it becomes the opening of a discussion.

The first and most common type of participation in a meeting with an address is to provide opportunity for the audience or class to ask questions of the speaker. This is the type of meeting usually referred to under the term "forum" or "open forum." For instance, in an article in the *Journal of Religion*, for January, 1922, in which attention was directed to three pioneer organizations of the forum at Cooper Union, at the Church of the Ascension, New York City, and at Ford Hall, Boston, George W. Coleman states that a forum gives an opportunity for open discussion where objections may be raised as well as positions defined. He further gives a hint as to what he means by "open discussion" in his statement that an "open forum brings together all kinds of serious-minded people at stated times for the purpose of discussing the issues of life under the *leadership of recognized experts who stand ready to meet the challenge of any person in the audience who wishes to cross-examine them.*" This cross-examining by persons in the audience is the chief method in the ordinary forum. The speaker, a recognized expert in his field or one who is well known for his special point of view, presents a question for the evening in form of address without interruption. At the close, the meeting is thrown open for questions. These questions take two forms: Those who wish to understand more fully the point of view of the speaker or to secure additional information ask for elaboration of certain points. Those who have their minds already made up and wish to challenge his position ask questions to embarrass him. He is cross-examined, therefore, both by persons who wish further light and by persons who wish to heckle.

This type of forum is more useful than an address without questions. It prevents two faults of the ordinary public meeting. On the one hand, the speaker may be misunderstood or the members of the audience may wish further information from him; on the other hand, he may "get away" with statements which are either intentionally or unintentionally misleading, where there is no chance for challenge. He will be more careful in his statements and the audience will receive more than if the opportunity for questions were not provided. The difficulties of such a forum are two: first, there is no real participation by the group. The questions merely give the speaker a chance to make several more short speeches. In the second place, if the question is a disputatious one, the meeting resolves itself into a contest between the audience and the speaker, the audience heckling the speaker, and the speaker in turn defending himself from these various thrusts. Such an attitude in an audience does not represent an open-minded search for the truth but simply a contest between the speaker and his audience. There is a place for asking the speaker questions; but discussion involves reaction by the group to what the speaker has said.

A second type of meeting in which there is discussion of a lecture or address represents a modification of the one just described. In this, the speaker has opportunity to present his subject fully. When he has finished, he leaves the platform and takes his place in the audience as any other member of the group and under the chairman of the meeting the discussion of the question goes forward on the basis of this presentation. The difference in attitude toward a speaker under these conditions is very interesting. When he is on the platform he has the relationship to the group, of authority; when he becomes a member of the audience others reply to him or question him with little sense of conflict and he takes his part much more easily in the discussion. For instance, in an address on some mooted points in religion, an expert in this realm, who had been the speaker, took his relative share in the discussion with

persons who would have been hesitant under ordinary forum conditions. A genuine discussion took place to which the speaker made his contributions, but which he did not monopolize.

It is not enough in such a meeting for the chairman to say: "Is there any discussion?" Usually an address covers a number of points. Without any defining by the chairman of the points to be discussed, one person speaks on one and another on a different one, and the participation scatters badly and does not stay on one point long enough to make progress. If the topic is comprehensive, it gives opportunity for members of the group to air pet ideas only indirectly related to the topic, and the chairman has no way of ruling out such irrelevant speeches.

In preparing for such a forum, the chairman, either while the address is being given or through consultation with the speaker in advance, determines the main issues the speaker is to discuss. He puts these in question form, starting the discussion of the question by reminding the audience of the situation and problem presented by the speaker, or of the proposal he has made, or of the point of view he has presented. In short, the chairman places the address in a group thinking procedure and carries through the process, in relation to the address which has been given.

A third type of speaking meeting, in which there is discussion, is one in which persons representing more than one point of view on the same question open the discussion. It differs from a debate in that they do not attempt to argue one with the other, but simply to present their own point of view as the opening statements of the discussion. Following this the discussion proceeds as any other general discussion under a chairman, these persons taking their proportionate share in the proceedings but not monopolizing the conversation.

In such a meeting it is important that there be a specific, clearly defined issue on which they are to speak or a syllabus for their presentations. Otherwise, under the same general

topic or problem, the speakers may discuss different issues and their addresses never meet. At a conference of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews on "Public and Religious Education," this happened in a comparison of the points of view of these three religious groupings. Three opening addresses were made by a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister, and a Jewish rabbi, respectively. But under this general topic, they discussed such different specific questions that the addresses had little relation to each other and there was no basis for a discussion in comparison of the three points of view.

In such a gathering the speeches are sometimes prepared in advance and the assembly is given to a discussion of the issues on which the printed articles present data and varying points of view. This plan has been followed at times in the Religious Education Association. On the questions to be discussed, the necessary data and the points of view of leading religious educators were presented in the magazine in advance of the convention. On the basis of these papers a syllabus was prepared for one of the conventions much as a chairman might prepare such a syllabus in relation to an address. The convention discussed the issues on the basis of the syllabus and with the printed papers as a background. A committee on findings listened to the discussions and brought in, session by session, summaries of the mind of the group, including both agreements and differences.

The speaker can help the discussion if he will put his address in group thinking form. If he has a question to present for discussion, he should himself define the central problem and put it in its setting, and present it to the audience in discussion form. If he has a proposal to make it should be presented in relation to its alternatives and with the clashing points of view indicated so that it becomes the opening of the discussion. A speech can be made in such form and spirit that it encourages examination and discussion.

CHAPTER XI

GROUP THINKING AND REAL CONVICTIONS

The question is often raised whether, by the group thinking process, there can be secured that conviction which leads persons to act at all costs and despite sacrifices involved. Group thinking is held by some to be ineffective in securing action because people do not act on facts, but on feeling; because they do not do what the evidence shows to be right but what their emotions make them desire. The question is asked: Is it not inevitable that the examination of facts and the weighing of reasons will be so largely intellectual that it will lack the incentive to action secured by the inspirational address? Will not some provision for bringing an emotional appeal to act be necessary if anything is to happen? Therefore, the claim is made that it is necessary to put back of a proposal an emotional reinforcement so that it will be carried into action.

This has frequently been the assumption in the sermon or other address. The speaker first presents the facts and reasons about them. Then he attempts to reinforce his conclusions by appeal to the emotions through a story recalling early childhood experiences or associating the action with some deep feeling. This assumes that in any situation, there is first a cold, dispassionate process of thinking to which is brought later the reinforcement of emotion; that a person decides what to do and then must have an extra urge of inspiration to get him to carry it out.

The Place of Emotion in Group Thinking

This assumption that group thinking is predominately an intellectual process is based on a misunderstanding of the part emotion plays in thinking. Feeling is not something added as a reinforcement to action at the close of a thought process but

is an integral part of every stage of thinking. It is true that individuals and groups differ in degree and type of emotion. There are individuals who in cold and dispassionate fashion weigh facts and examine evidence. For them emotion is reduced to the minimum. There are individuals of strong emotion who are ruled by their prejudices and carried away by their feelings. For them, the intellectual element is reduced to the minimum. But for both, the intellectual and emotional elements are present. The difference is in the degree of each which is found.

We do not trust the decision, when either the intellectual or the emotional element predominates. The cold, dispassionate individual does not care enough about the issues, is not enough concerned with the outcome, to give proper attention to his decision. More than this, issues so lacking in feeling and facts so devoid of emotional content cannot have their true significance. They are not true to life, for life is made up of real concerns. Neither can the decisions of persons ruled by violent and prejudiced emotion be trusted. They act largely on their feelings without reference to the facts. The evidence is for them distorted; it cannot be seen nor understood clearly. The person who can be trusted, combines in a proper and dynamic balance these two characteristics. Such persons care about a situation sufficiently to want to do something about it, but their feeling is tempered so they can see the situation clearly and in perspective. Evidence has to them real meaning because it has the emotion which accompanies reality, but their emotion is tempered by judgment and, therefore, can be trusted. They are the persons whose judgment is given reality by emotion and whose emotion is given balance by judgment; whose concern has the check of reason, but whose reason has the warmth of emotion.

The reason it has been assumed that inspiration to action must be added to a conclusion is the fact that groups are asked to accept proposals to which the persons advocating them are enthusiastically committed, because in the process of reaching

these conclusions their emotions have been stirred. They bring their conclusions to persons who have had no chance for their emotions to be aroused because they have had no opportunity to face the situation for themselves or to think about the question. Finding these persons cold and seemingly unresponsive, those convinced of the conclusion have sought various means of inducing in their hearers their own emotions. These are usually artificial and lack that power which comes from a conviction one has formed for himself. In proportion as a person is attempting to win a group to the results of his own thinking will he need to use artificial methods of stirring up emotion in order to secure action. In proportion as a group has had opportunity to face issues for itself and to come to its own conclusions, will emotion be inherent and an artificial stimulus be unnecessary.

The question then becomes: What sort and degree of emotion ensures the most reliable group thinking? If group thinking is to have that depth of emotion which is most effective in securing results, the situation must be one of concern to the group, the issue must be one which the group feels to be important. Fear of facing real problems sometimes leads a group to consider trivial questions of no moment to the members. At other times the group has only an intellectual curiosity in the problem and carries on the discussion only because of enjoyment in batting ideas back and forth. Such a proceeding is a kind of intellectual "daily dozen." It may provide a lively session for a while; it may bring out the latent humor of the group; but it does not bring any results. In proportion as the situation is of concern to the group members and the issues make any difference in their life, will there be a deep emotional accompaniment. One purpose of taking time to let the members of the group describe the situation or situations rather than simply to state the problem is to allow the concern which is present to be expressed and an appropriate amount of emotion to develop. In the preliminary part of the discussion care must be taken to see that whatever genuine

feeling there is may be shared by all. In a situation which concerns one, but in which one does not as yet see the way out, there is a sense of strain, of unrest, of suspense, of real desire to find what to do, which is genuinely emotional and which makes a person "feel" that something must be done in the situation. This emotional element is not something added. Indeed, only as they care about what happens will the members of a group be willing to search for a way out. If the group members are only casually interested or if the result makes little difference to them, the discussion will not have the reality which brings a creative outcome. If the group members are vitally concerned and feel they must find an answer to their problem, they will act on the decision arrived at, especially if they are convinced it is the best course of action under all the circumstances.

One course of action seems more desirable than another because it provides for certain things which are worth while to the person making the proposal. The "why" one course of action seems better or more worth while than another involves values which appear essential. In proportion as these values are of a sort which seem to the individual important and in proportion as he has laid hold on these values and made them guiding to his life, is there emotion in presenting them. Indeed, a main difficulty in discussions is to keep emotion from becoming so manifest that it will prevent fair-minded examination of proposals which seem to go against values considered worth while. Where points of view are compared, considerations are examined, purposes are appraised, there is an evaluating process as to what is worth while, as to what is best, which is deep in its emotional content. In the search for what to do there are yearning, anticipation, struggle, hope, desire, which are charged with emotion.

When the conclusion is reached on which all can agree, which looks as if it would be really a way out, as if it might solve the problem, there is a sense of release, of satisfaction, of achievement, and with it an accompanying exaltation. The

emotion at this stage is in proportion to the concern the group has felt in regard to the situation and its problem.

A summary may make this clear :

| STEPS IN GROUP THINKING | INTELLECTUAL ELEMENTS | ACCOMPANYING EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS |
|--|---|--|
| I. Situation and problems: | Understanding situation. Realizing important factors | Suspense, strain, sense of being thwarted |
| II. What to do: | | |
| 1. Possible courses of action | Searching for possibilities | Yearning, anticipation, desire, hope |
| 2. Consideration of real reasons for each proposal. Why? . | Understanding considerations for each | Enthusiasm or antagonism to proposals |
| 3. Recognition of bonds and underlying agreements. | Understanding bonds and agreements | Feeling of sympathy and oneness |
| 4. Exploration of differences as to fact and conviction. | Verifying facts. Weighing evidence. Examining scales of value | Feeling of conflict and of concern for outcome |
| 5. Conclusion. Specific course of action with reasons. | Making a judgment | Satisfaction, release, exaltation |
| III. How to do it: | | |
| Ways and means . . | Searching for ways and means. Consideration of practicability | Strain, anticipation, yearning, with satisfaction and release when ways and means are discovered |

The very function of group thinking, then, is to furnish a method by which conclusions which are genuine conclusions can be reached. This is the most direct answer to the critics who say that persons who believe in group discussion always hold their decisions in suspense and take a neutral attitude on the great concerns of life. This criticism shows a complete misunderstanding of the group process. Most situations faced

by groups are those in which a neutral attitude is not possible; action or attitude of some sort is inevitable. To take what is called a neutral attitude is really to act in the negative. The real crux of the question is not whether groups will come to conclusions and have convictions but whether these conclusions and convictions shall be held as so final and inviolate that they are not subject to change. This is an important point in the group process. If a conviction is later modified, many people assume that this means it was not a genuine conviction in the first place.

The Relation of Convictions to Group Thinking

Experience shows that there is nothing inconsistent with holding a conviction so strongly that one would be willing to bet his life upon it, and yet at the same time holding that conclusion subject to change, and indeed, expecting to improve upon it. This is true in the medical profession of methods of curing disease; it is true in industrial life of inventions; and in social life, of items of progress. Because a conclusion may later be improved upon in the light of experience does not mean that it cannot be followed now whole heartedly as the best that has been found to date. Changes in convictions, if the process is carried on constructively, do not represent a reversal of former conclusions or an ignoring of valid convictions, but better ways of acting, built upon the results already achieved.

People raise the question whether in matters of genuine concern they should trust their convictions to the group thinking process. Some missionaries, for instance, say that they are so convinced of the supremacy of the Christian religion that they do not feel justified in submitting it to a process in which the contribution of Christianity shall be shared in relation to other religions. They feel rather that they should seek to win persons of other faiths unreservedly to the adoption of Christianity. Many ministers feel that their function is not to provide opportunity for the sharing of beliefs and convictions, but that they should consider themselves men

with a message which they should urge upon the people. Every consideration must be given to this point of view, but at the same time it seems to represent an assumption as to the adequacy and finality of any particular belief which is hardly warranted by experience. At the present time, there are an increasing number of ministers and missionaries who are ready to think of themselves as bringing their testimony with earnestness, but as sharing with others in a cooperative venture in the development of a vital religious faith.

Another criticism of group thinking often made is that it makes no provision for the earnest sharing of conviction. In group thinking, they say, no one can advocate anything or testify in regard to what he believes to be right and true. All he can do is to say in placid non-emotional fashion, "These are the facts. Take them or leave them, as you wish." It must be evident that a true group process involves just the opposite. It requires the most earnest sharing of experience and of convictions. Unless the testimony in group discussion has behind it the reality of life and the glow of enthusiasm, the discussion is an insipid and meaningless affair.

In life, people take various attitudes toward the sharing of their convictions. There are individuals who superimpose or urge nothing. If asked for their experience they share it, but they make no effort to bring their convictions to others. In a second group are those who feel responsible to contribute their experience and point of view. These individuals feel a moral responsibility to take their part in the group process, but they expect also to listen to the experience and point of view of others. They do not expect their own convictions will be adopted without change; but rather that, in the mutual process within the group, gradual modification and growth in their own convictions will take place along with those of others.

There is a third attitude: that of the persons who hold their convictions with great confidence; and because they value them highly, feel obligated to win others to the same convictions. These convictions seem to them so important and so valuable

that rather than modify them, they will break with friends and even leave the group of which they have been a part. The truth is that either to refuse to share one's convictions or to give them in an unconcerned manner is as inconsistent with the group process as to insist that others must adopt them. It is possible to share a conviction with the greatest earnestness and at the same time wish to know the convictions of others. The problem in a group is to bring the members to a place where they have a mutual attitude, where each seeks to contribute earnestly, but where each is also ready to listen with equal alertness.

There are individuals who feel that certain convictions have reached for them a stage of finality, in which reexamination is not possible. They feel that such conclusions as the superiority of monogamy, the finality of the Christian religion, the maintenance of industrial and social differences are fixed and eternally true. In some cases these convictions have been accepted simply on authority and have never been examined. They are socially inherited. In other cases they have been questioned at some time in the life of the individual; but were reaccepted with increased finality as the result. There is a second type whose convictions have arrived at practical working conclusions which only extraordinary evidence would change. Intellectually, people holding this type of convictions say they are willing to reexamine them; but practically, they admit they do not expect to find conditions which will lead them to do so. Such convictions become practical absolutes even though not held as fixed and eternally true. Convictions of a third type are those in which individuals genuinely believe, but which they take as working hypotheses. They accept them with confidence because they represent the best they have been able to find, but they expect in experience to reexamine these convictions, and to improve upon them.

The first position has usually been arrived at emotionally and frequently is inherited from early training and environment. The second type of conviction is usually found among

more mature persons who have tested certain convictions through long experience. Whether this person can grow further depends upon the number of his convictions which have reached the stage of practical absolutism. The third position represents the individual who is taking the truly scientific attitude toward life. His convictions are working hypotheses which he brings to the new situation, but he comes to that situation hoping and searching for better ways than he has as yet found.

The effect of these three positions upon a group process must be at once evident. It will be seen that there are genuine difficulties in a discussion group composed of people who hold their convictions as fixed and eternally true, because the question never really gets into the area of discussion until the convictions on which conclusions are based can be reexamined. This is especially true if the convictions are those which have grown out of early experience and have been formed by processes almost exclusively emotional. When the convictions have sacred associations of home and church and have been held from early childhood, a reexamination of them seems like a criticism of parents and early training. Individuals who hold convictions as fixed and eternally true, use them only as points of reference in the discussion and they make no progress beyond these convictions. "If you can show me that it is contrary to the Christian religion (by which he means his conception of the Christian religion) I will have nothing of it," one person says. For another, to seem to prove a course of action is contrary to the principles of his political party is sufficient to condemn it. Those who hold convictions in the second stage of definiteness, as practical absolutes, will usually be found to have some convictions in this stage of finality and others which they have as working hypotheses. They are more easily led to reexamine their convictions than are persons whose conclusions are of the type just described, but in actual experience they differ less in the finality than in the spirit with which they advocate their convictions.

They are likely to be more tolerant of opposing convictions even though immovable in regard to their own. But where convictions are held as working hypotheses a true group process is possible.

It must not be assumed that group thinking means that every time a decision is made all of one's bases of life are re-examined. As a matter of fact, nobody ever does reexamine every conviction. The difference is in the attitude and the consequent results. The person who expects progress welcomes criticism and is alert for new evidence. It would be a denial of the group process if there were no possibility of change and progress, because group thinking involves testing conclusions and assumes that the group will in new situations, in the light of their past experience, find better ways of acting than they have thus far attained.

It is interesting to note that a person may be quite fair-minded in one realm and closed in another, determined to win his point whether he is a radical or a conservative. This was well illustrated by a group in a certain liberal, by many considered a radical, church. Those in the group said they were quite willing to leave open the question of personal religious belief. A person might be Mohammedan or Buddhist or Christian and join with them. When asked if they would be willing to admit into fellowship a person of extreme capitalistic point of view (they happened to be economic radicals), they said, "Oh no, it makes a great difference what you think economically, and we feel we would have to take steps to see if we could not change him from his erroneous economic views." Here was a radical group of persons quite willing to take an open-minded attitude on questions that seemed of smaller concern to them; but who felt that they must try to convert other people, when issues which seemed more vital were involved.

Group Thinking and Social Change

Whether the group process will sufficiently arouse persons

to the issues and can develop the reconstructive principle soon enough to prevent the forces of discontent insisting upon revolutionary methods is a question frequently raised by those interested in social and economic change. They say: "Is not the democratic process limited to the discovery of ways and means among those who are already desirous of discovering the best way of life? How can questions upon which people seem to be closed minded be brought within the area of discussion? Is not propaganda necessary to secure conversion, where the questions are ones of real concern? What can the educational method do with evil and the will-to-evil in adults, especially if these adults are convinced that they are right despite objective evidence?"

There is, in these questions, an assumption that the person who refuses to admit himself wrong, despite objective evidence, is a culpable individual. There are, however, only a limited number of issues on which the best conscience of people is united, and the social will is unmistakable. There are some persons who are opposing or evading the operation of this social will for personal reasons or because of vested interests. They are the real culprits. A person runs by the traffic signal not because he thinks the traffic system is wrong, but because it is to his personal advantage at the moment and he is willing to take a chance on the social good for his private gain. Such persons are the really antisocial individuals and no one doubts that, for the present at least, some form of restraint is necessary to make operative the plain and united will of the people. But areas of violations of this sort are restricted and handled by judicial action.

On most of the questions of the day, persons of seemingly equal honesty and sincerity disagree. It depends on the point of view of the speaker whether those persons to whom reference is made as refusing to be convinced, despite objective evidence, are the capitalists who believe in the capitalistic system, or the radicals who believe in the overthrow of it; the persons who believe in war or those who think that under no

circumstances should it be tolerated; the persons who have confidence in nationalism or those who feel that nationalism is a great evil; the ones who feel that some racial discrimination is necessary or those who feel that no racial discrimination is justified. There are a number of questions of this sort. The same objective evidence leads one group to take one attitude and another group to take the opposite attitude. Indeed, frequently they hold to their course of action for the same ideals, because they think they are right, or Christian, or best for the human welfare, or for social progress. The persons who are not convinced despite objective evidence are frequently also members of the church, respected persons in the community, to the best of their ability seeking to live out the good life. Whichever side of the question they are on, they seem to those with opposing points of view to be holding convictions inconsistent with Christianity or social ideals. It would seem, therefore, that the attitude that one side must be wholly right and the other wholly wrong must be abandoned. If a group of reputable persons refuse to be convinced that they are wrong, despite objective evidence, then there must be something worth considering in their position.

In all this, it must be admitted at once that people's motives are mixed. It would help if people would admit frankly that in most cases they have a combination of selfish and unselfish, biased and open-minded, attitudes. Any person must admit at once that he comes to any question with a certain amount of bias due to early training and education, the country to which he belongs, the church of which he is a member, the social set of which he is a part. It is almost impossible to divest oneself entirely of personal bias. It depends upon whose personal bias it is whether we call it vested interest or a commendable loyalty. For instance, loyalty to the church, even to the extent of bigotry, is commended by some, whereas if it happened to be loyalty to a business enterprise it would be called a vested interest. It is called patriotism if it happens to be one's own country; it is called wicked purpose if

it happens to be the loyalty to an enemy country. Capital considers its own attempts to preserve its interests as commendable; but the efforts of labor as anarchistic and Bolshevistic. On the other hand, labor calls its efforts to secure its rights commendable class loyalty and the inevitable class struggle but regards the efforts of capitalism as arrogant and dangerous. So the social radical sees it from one point of view and the social conservative from another. The most earnest efforts to look at evidence objectively cannot, therefore, be completely successful. Since our motives are mixed it would seem the only charitable thing to do to recognize not only that the other person may be biased but that we also are probably prejudiced.

Of course, many people have quite a different attitude. They are frankly puzzled as to what to do. Tentatively, and indeed with some conviction, they hold this or that point of view, but are baffled and not completely satisfied. They do not wish to be propagandized by the person with this or that scheme, but to have the opportunity to confer with others who are interested in the problem with the hope that some better solution will be secured. They hesitate to enter upon such conference because so frequently they are met with the insistence of others that they must adopt certain proposals and they find themselves on the defensive because the advocates of these particular courses of action seek to cast a question upon the motives of the individuals who refuse to accept their proposals.

Securing Consideration of Closed Questions

No question will ever be brought within the area of discussion by the insistence that it cannot be discussed until the persons who disagree admit in advance of a discussion not only that they are wrong but that they intend to be wrong. No person has a right to ask another to reconsider his point of view and to examine whether it is wrong unless he is himself also willing to reexamine his own views and reconsider whether he also may not be wrong. Just as soon as the social radicals or the social conservatives cease trying either to subdue or con-

vert those who disagree with them and ask that they may "reason together" will there be some hope in our complex economic and social life. There is a place for conversion in the democratic process, but the conversion will not be one person converting another by argument or attack or propaganda. It will be conversion brought about by thoughtful discussion on the plane of respect and it will mean, probably, some conversion on both sides. The present method of attempting to convert the other person arouses antagonism. At a certain school a person was earnestly trying to convert a group to a different viewpoint in religion. He went at it with the greatest earnestness and enthusiasm. At the close he remarked, "I put it over on them today. They will have to admit it." Listening to the comments afterwards showed that he had not put it over. They had not replied because they had no opportunity, but they were more unconvinced than before. His very method—that of attack—had brought out everything in human nature they had in the way of defense and they had reacted by reinforcing their own position against his attack rather than by modifying it. Conflict is of service when it brings out differences and is the first step toward reconciliation, but when it results in defense reactions and is associated with aspersions as to the sincerity and Christianity of the opposing points of view it hinders rather than helps.

Some think that the war method is necessary as a preliminary to conference. The enemy must be defeated and brought to his senses before there can be a peace parley. Frequently, in international affairs as well as in social relationships, war as the preliminary to the parley, means that the parley is but the preliminary to another war. If the majority wins and makes the minority come to the parley, the minority comes in bad spirit and nine times out of ten goes from the parley to make plans to become the majority and win. So the series becomes war, parley, war, parley. It would seem that the war method makes real conference impossible. In resort to certain political action and active propaganda, people have adopted what

they have frankly called fighting the devil with the devil's methods. Particularly has this been true of certain reform movements. Those interested in true progress must be willing to abandon such forms of force and coercion and be ready to trust, at whatever immediate cost, the practice of creative good will. Otherwise, the immediate results may be more than offset by the hate, suspicion, and division which such methods cause, and the very ends may be defeated by the character of the methods used to reach them. Questions are brought within the range of consideration and persons are brought to concern about issues to which they are blind, by the sharing of experience in the spirit of friendship. More interest is aroused by one person sharing with another his concern than by one person arguing with another for a particular proposal or attempting to convert the other individual. To find persons whom one respects and in whom one believes troubled about racial, economic, or other conditions often leads one to look into these questions for himself.

Group Thinking and Enthusiasm

Many fear that in the democratic process the enthusiasms of life will be lost. They say: "How can you expect persons to give themselves with the abandon which characterized those who had a passion for a result which they wished achieved?" They point out missionary zeal, evangelistic endeavor, reform movements, such as the abolition of slavery and the saloon, as evidences of ends to be accomplished to which people gave themselves with complete energy and enthusiasm. This query should be faced directly. It is true that there is a concreteness and definiteness about an immediate specific goal to which people can be rallied that probably will not be found when life is lived more fully on the cooperative basis. A soul to be converted, a member of another religion to be won, a saloon to be closed, a slave to be set free gives the basis for the appeal to emotion and the end of the attainment may be made so concrete that people will rally to the specific endeavor.

But having said this, it must be recognized that in the democratic process there is offered a more inclusive and commanding appeal to enthusiasm than in the more restricted propaganda or reform movement. The difference is not in the definiteness of the appeal but in its type. The focus of attention is shifted from a particular specific course of action to be adopted to an earnest search for the best way to solve the problem or remove the difficulty. Take an immediate personal example. A loved one in the home is dangerously ill. Some person comes to the home to try to prove to the relatives that a particular treatment or remedy will certainly cure, and does his utmost to have them adopt it. Some other person, with wide knowledge of various physicians and types of treatment, works earnestly with the relatives in helping them find and use the physician and the treatment which are really likely to save the loved one. Both have the same end result in mind—the cure of the person who is sick. One comes with enthusiasm for one particular treatment; the other with the resourcefulness of experience and the earnestness of search which concern alone can bring, to cover the world if necessary to find and use that which will bring the desired cure. To say that the individual who advocates a particular treatment has more enthusiasm and earnestness than the individual who searches far and wide for means to save the loved one is simply to misunderstand the facts of life.

This same thing is true in any other realm. In race relations, one person comes with a definite scheme for race amelioration. Some other person is committed to the cause of race relations but is experimenting and seeking in every way to find the methods by which this may be brought about and is willing to cooperate earnestly in the use of these methods. One person has a particular scheme for securing better relations between capital and labor; some other person is working earnestly and cooperatively with other people in searching for and employing the best methods. In short, there is no difference in the cause in which one is interested, in the situations

which one is trying to better. The difference is in the method. One has a definite proposal which he tries to have adopted; the other is working with others equally interested, expecting and knowing that, out of the richness of their experience, a better proposal than any of them has yet discovered will be found as they work together cooperatively in the best plans which have as yet been discovered. Their enthusiasm will be in proportion to their concern and to their belief that the greater goal can be attained.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT TO DO WITH EMOTIONAL PREJUDICE AND BIAS

While deep and strong emotion, integrated with judgment, is the source of strength in a discussion, emotional bias and bitter feeling defeat any true group process. A discussion entered into by contending groups and conducted in the spirit of argument may end in confusion and rancor without anything creative having happened.

The questions which make the most difference in life are those on which there is strong feeling and frequently deep prejudice. Relations between the races, adjustments between labor and capital, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, prohibition, sex standards and practices, are issues charged with emotion. On the questions, therefore, which make the most difference, persons do not come with calm, rational judgment, seeking on the basis of evidence to find the solution. They often come to the question suspecting the opposition, doubting the motives of people who disagree, genuinely fearing the consequences of any change, easily angered by any suggestions, taking attitudes often with strong conviction without knowing the reason for their convictions. How potent is this appeal to prejudiced emotion is seen in the use of such epithets as "Bolshevist" and "radical." It is said that in China frequently two individuals, who become angry, attempt for an hour to yell each other down, without there being any particular reason in what is said. The attempt of an American jury to come to a decision is sometimes not unlike this performance. Certainly, discussions of disputatious questions are in danger of taking on these characteristics. The first problem which those arranging such a discussion face is that of bringing these questions from the realm of emotional argument, based on

prejudice, into the realm of deep but calmer feeling where there is a willingness to examine evidence and look at questions from another person's point of view.

There is no way of insuring in advance that members of a group will bring the right attitude to the discussion. If a group is jumpy and combative, however, some way must be found to secure a general willingness to receive suggestions from all quarters and to accord respect to opposing views. Emotional tension must be relieved. At this point, the democratic process is solidly up against the habitual, fixed convictions and prejudices which our present training has fostered and enlarged. At first, these obstacles seem enough to wreck the process.

To correct emotional bias is difficult. Most people think of their prejudices as sacred convictions. To doubt such convictions is to doubt *them*. One purpose of group thinking is to help people to see which convictions are prejudices, emotionally inherited through social experience. In the process of discussion, individuals sometimes come to realize that a different background of experience produces convictions opposite to their own, which are held with the same sense of inner inviolability. So many feelings have been developed uncritically that no one must take too seriously convictions on which he feels violently. Indeed, they frequently are called convictions if they are our own, and prejudices if they are contrary convictions of someone else. Anyone can discover this by a simple test. Let him give his first emotional response to the words "Turk," "Bolshevist," "capitalist," "Mexican," or other words charged for him with emotion. Let him explore how he happens to feel as he does, and discover the difference between this first emotional response and that which he would defend as his intelligent conviction. True convictions are courses of action in which individuals believe and about which they feel strongly, not because they happened to be born in a certain family, to have a particular color of skin, to live in a certain nation, to have seen certain movie or cartoon represen-

tations, or to have been raised in a certain denomination or political party, but because they have examined the evidence, discussed the issues, and reached a conviction.

Representation of All Sides

A first essential to the successful discussion of any disputatious question upon which there is strong emotion is that the parties to the issue meet together in person. Diplomatic exchange between conflicting groups, whether national, industrial, racial, or religious, does not make for constructive reconciliation of conflict. In the presence of those with feelings like our own, all the actions of one's own group seem virtuous and above reproach and the feeling against the other group tends to grow stronger and stronger. It is frequently a surprise to persons, who have always understood that people with certain points of view were disreputable individuals, to find when they get in the same room with them that instead of being devils incarnate they seem to be just ordinary folk like themselves. It helps especially in releasing the emotional tension, if those who represent the opposition are persons known by the others present, as of character and fine personality. It is very easy to condemn both the persons and the point of view, if one does not know those holding a conviction; but it is difficult to believe that either is as bad as they have been pictured, once one becomes acquainted. This is the reason that, in war, the military strategists are afraid to have the soldiers on the opposite sides fraternize, lest they find it difficult to believe all that they have been told.

The whole point of the democratic process is to bring opposing views into each other's presence. A discussion on a disputatious question will need to have at least some representatives of the opposite side present. At times it is not possible to get a fifty-fifty representation. Where there is very strong feeling, it may be better to exchange representatives at first; in other words, to bring a representative of capital to sit in to represent capital in the labor discussion and *vice versa*. Later

it is possible to bring into the discussion a few selected representatives from the other group. This is sometimes the best way to begin because it will arouse less tension at first than where a greater number are present. Indeed, even before this is possible, the chairman can get a group to look at the question as the other group sees it.

Development of Fellowship

A second important factor is to establish as rapidly as possible just as much sharing of interests and life between the conflicting parties as possible. If they can come to know each other in realms apart from conflict, it helps toward fellowship. The European Student Relief Conference, at Parad, Hungary, was, without question, helped in its development of fellowship by a day spent on the Danube en route to the conference, in which delegates from a number of the nations had a chance to get acquainted. Sometimes games or a social event in which persons become acquainted and have real fun together aids this fellowship. Even for persons unacquainted to tell at the beginning of a discussion their names, what they represent, and what their interests are aids the socialization of the group.

Everything which is said in the chapter on "Conditions for Creative Discussion" concerning the common interests or purposes which bind a group together, applies here. In every group it will soon be discovered that however much it is divided, still it has many bonds which unite. Fellowship is hastened if these bonds can be recognized early in the discussion.

Postponement of Disputatious Questions

A third suggestion is to commence the discussion on the less disputatious questions and postpone dealing with the more serious ones until the group has learned to work together. It is difficult enough anyway for a group of persons unaccustomed to thinking together to become an effective and cooperative group. If this is made still more difficult, by commencing

ing with the questions on which there is the keenest feeling, it may greatly hinder the discussion. At the Estes Park Assembly of Workers with Boys, without question the problem on which there was the keenest feeling was the one of program. The committee commenced with an issue on which there was less emotion; namely membership. Some of the delegates became impatient because the conference did not at once attack the main problem, but in those first days the members of the conference learned to work together; they had a chance to discuss some of the issues involved in program in the less disputatious setting of membership; they got points of view out into the open in a more constructive fashion; and, when program was considered, time was saved and greater frankness was possible.

At the World Conference of the Y.M.C.A. at Helsingfors, the serious clash was around theology; just what were the most important essentials in the Christian religion. Some in the preliminary planning suggested that this be discussed the first day, so that having settled on fundamentals, the conference could give the balance of its time to practical questions of program. But it would have seriously endangered the entire conference to have asked the delegates from forty nations to commence their discussions on this crucial question. The first days were given to sharing concern about young men and boys, to comparing the situations in the various countries, and to reporting some of the methods of meeting these difficulties. On the third day, the question of Christian belief was considered directly. There was strong emotion manifested in the discussions; but such a bond of fellowship and mutual confidence had already been established that the discussion proved constructive and helpful.

Consideration of Questions from Opposing Points of View

If, in the fourth place, the chairman can get the entire group at work, presenting the situation or various proposals as they look to various parties to the situation, it will

help. At this point, there should be no attempts at appraisal. The questions should be phrased so that each person will speak not for himself but in a representative capacity—Negroes as I know them; white men as I know them, say. Just to have the situation, as it looks to the conflicting parties stated, or the reasons for suggested courses of action recognized means that the group has moved toward the admission that there might be honest and sincere people who think this way. Perhaps the greatest step toward mutual understanding and modification of opinion is to look at a proposal from another person's point of view. For instance, a discussion was being held on the basis of membership in a Christian organization. There were present some of the older leaders of the movement who felt that to change from the historical basis of membership was to lower the standards of the organization, and who were inclined to say that those who desired the change did it because they were less spiritual than the former generation had been. On the other hand, the younger persons who were in the discussion felt that the older position was so theological that it lacked vitality, and they were inclined to say that certain people were insisting upon it simply because they were old fogies and not willing to change their minds. Well-known representatives of these two points of view were present in a forum discussion of the question. The chairman worked to get the entire group, but particularly the older members, to indicate the reasons why certain persons felt that a change of membership would help the spiritual life of the organization. The older persons present discussed the way it looked to those who really wanted the membership basis changed. Then the chairman asked the entire group, but particularly the younger members, to indicate why those who wanted to stay by the older basis felt that this was necessary for the spiritual welfare of the organization. And here the younger group worked to indicate the way the question looked to the older persons. It was the recognition that each was honestly seeking a value worth while which turned the discus-

sion. Critical attitudes on the part of both the younger group and the older group disappeared and when the question came, "What basis of membership will best conserve the spiritual welfare of the organization?" both parties were working together in an attempt to see what could be done to gather up the contributions of all.

While, in general, it is best to give only the reasons in favor of the various proposals, it sometimes helps in especially disputatious questions to recognize their strong and their weak points. In this way individuals both praise and criticize their own position and are less likely to be aroused if their position is criticized by others. At times, a group commences to state in a sarcastic or derogatory manner the reasons for a point of view with which they do not agree as if these were preposterous and held by rather questionable people, but in the interests of fairness, they were being stated. The chairman can help at this point. He can suggest that they are not now appraising the point of view, but are trying to find why it is held by those who really believe it is the way out. This is an important turning point in a discussion on a prejudiced question. If at this point the opposition to a question can be led to state why other people believe it is the best or the most desirable way through, the mind-set has been changed from one of ridicule or sarcasm to one of respect.

Release of Strong Emotion

It is usually essential, in the fifth place, that at some time the strong emotion be expressed with whatever vehemence the individuals feel. Until this happens, no constructive results are likely to be secured. The chairman must be sensitive so that he may recognize the time in the progress of the discussion when this emotion can be released without negative results. As already suggested, it is evident that this kind of emotion cannot be allowed to express itself at the beginning. It would then break up the discussion in disorder, or at least develop so much

rancor and bitterness that constructive results later would not be possible. But just as soon as mutual respect has been sufficiently secured and bonds of fellowship established with enough firmness so that the chairman thinks the group can weather the emotional storm, he should be on the lookout for the occasion to let the storm break.

The occasion of the emotional release is always interesting and seemingly never twice the same. At a national assembly of workers with boys it broke around the discussion of a pin. A visitor to the assembly could not understand why these workers spent an entire evening of almost violent discussion about a pin. But the pin was but a symbol, and it proved the occasion for the release of fears and concerns and other emotions pent up until that time. They expressed by way of the pin concerns they had, fears of other people and sections of the country, attitudes towards other movements. When the chairman saw what was happening, he let the entire evening be given to the discussion. The next morning the assembly went to its business constructively as if the emotional storm of the night before had never occurred. At a planning conference for an assembly, where many suspected that the chairman had come to put discussion method over on a conference, the emotion broke over the failure of the chairman in the leadership of a group discussion. He asked the conference to consider why the discussion had failed, and this gave the occasion for those who opposed discussion to express vehemently their fears and suspicions. The chairman made no defense; but the conference itself frankly appraised these fears, and with these suspicions recognized and released it was possible to move forward constructively. At another national gathering, with considerable feeling between sections of the country, and some suspicion of a national leader, the frank expression of emotion became possible because one person in the group had the honesty and courage to say the things which ordinarily would not have been expressed. This led others to follow with equal frankness. It was a tense session; but with fears

and suspicions out in the open, it was possible to move forward.

One secret of the vitality of group discussion of a question where there is strong emotion is the achievement of this frankness in an atmosphere of good will. If, in a discussion, the members play a part one with the other and do not represent their real attitudes and convictions, any conclusion reached is unstable because it is not founded upon reality. In the interracial groups at a national student convention, students who had strong feelings against the Negroes said exactly what they thought of them in open meeting with the Negroes present, and the Negroes replied, indicating just what they felt about the attitudes of the whites. These statements hurt and there was tenseness of feeling which looked as if it might break up some of the groups. In a meeting dominated by bickering and misunderstanding, such seemingly brutal frankness would have resulted in the increase of hatred and in actual disorder; but there was such earnestness in it all and such evident desire to understand one another that the result of this frankness was increased respect and mutual understanding.

A main difficulty in securing cooperative discussion between older and younger persons is the fact that older persons often hold back part of the truth regarding their youth and advise in discussion what they really did not practice. If the older generation would frankly admit what is true, that they did face these same problems and that practices they may now question looked very attractive to them, they could enter into the experiences through which the younger generation is passing, and they could make available any help which their larger experience would bring. In turn, if the younger generation would express its suspicions of the attitudes of the older persons and be ready to admit the sincerity of the elders, then they would contribute their part. Once the older generation is fair in admitting the side of the case which appeals to the young and is willing to give honest consideration to it, and the younger generation is ready to admit the genuineness of the

concern of the older generation, youth and age can discuss questions together.

The necessity for the expression of these feelings is evident. At its base, strong emotion is founded on fear that something will happen to the cause which is dear. Until these fears are out in the open, these suspicions and emotions expressed, the group members consciously or unconsciously have the feeling that the others are holding something back or are acting from motives different from those which appear on the surface.

It sometimes helps if a group recognizes its prejudices or even laughs about them. In a group in Horace Mann High School, discussing Prohibition, the teacher asked two questions. First he wanted to know how many in the group knew the facts about prohibition. They admitted, to a person, that they were quite ignorant; all that they knew was their general impression received from the newspaper accounts. He then asked them how many were sure they knew what should be done about prohibition. They were unanimous in their vote that they knew exactly what should be done, some thinking it should be repealed and others that it should be enforced. He then wanted to know what they felt was true of persons who were ignorant of an issue but were sure that they knew exactly what should be done about it. They laughed at their own inconsistency and decided that maybe they had better hold their decisions in abeyance until they had the chance to examine the question more fairly. A group of girls in the same high school were discussing the Irish question at the time it was the keenest. They had national affiliations on one side or the other of this question. They finally discovered that they were getting nowhere by argument and bitterness. On the suggestion of their teacher that they adopt as their motto "More light and less heat," they discussed the question and decided to go at it on the basis of facts, looking at evidence and not letting their prejudices and emotions rule them. Many a meeting can do just the same thing if the chairman, when matters get to a deadlock emotionally, would give the members

a chance to stop and look at the situation, frankly recognize what is going on, laugh about it when possible, and then make new plans.

Frequently, violent emotion is expressed for which there seems no adequate occasion in the discussion. A group of Southerners and Northerners, white and Negro, were discussing the race question. Some one in the group suggested that race amalgamation might eventually be the solution of the question, whatever might be the more desirable policy now. A girl in the group became greatly excited, and while she kept herself in outward control, said afterwards that she felt fearful, and wanted to get up and exclaim as to the preposterous character of the suggestion. Only the fact that others did not seem to be excited restrained her. In another discussion a man expressed himself vehemently and with every evidence of the strongest emotion, when a person in the group spoke of people of estimable character he had found among the non-Christian faiths. In a discussion of the sex question, when it was suggested that some seemingly reputable persons considered certain sex practices outside of marriage as the solution of the problem, a person in the group showed violent agitation. Quite without reference to the truth or the falsity of these positions, these were all cases of emotional conditioning. The suggestion set off the strong emotion but was not the cause of it. The Southern girl had been from early childhood emotionally taught to fear race amalgamation; the man in question had strong concerns around the superiority of the Christian religion; sex taboos were back of the violent agitation in the third case. When, from early childhood, a person has lived in an atmosphere where certain practices were considered wrong, there results what the psychologist calls the conditioned reflex. We have in original nature the possibility of strong fear in the face of any danger, and violent emotion to make us run from it. This works automatically and without reference to reason. Whether the fear is of a wild animal, as in primitive life; or of a sex practice, a race relation, or a

dangerous religious belief, as in modern life, the reaction is none the less automatic and violent. It is set off whenever any suggestion comes which would arouse this fear.

The Chairman's Attitude to Violent Emotion

When violent emotion is expressed in a group, the chairman must show no surprise nor agitation. He should at once in calm tones summarize what has been said so as to keep someone else from replying, and then go on with the discussion without evidence of special concern. Such emotion will yield only to being expressed without direct rebuttal, and to the confidence which emotional individuals develop in the group members as the discussion progresses. Ordinarily, the chairman does not repeat what a member of the group says; but when there is a strong emotional thrust he had better summarize at once so as to have it restated in less emotional tones and in order to prevent reply in like emotion. If it is the representation of a real point of view, the chairman can take the attitude of further inquiry as to the reasons for this conviction. In this way the speaker is thrown off the defense, says more about the point, and is led to talk as much as he can in terms of evidence. As he does this, he grows more and more calm as his point of view is given consideration. If, on the other hand, the chairman allows the group to commence heckling or rebutting his argument, the agitated individual becomes more and more emotional. The chairman should represent the group in listening to the point of view of even the most unreasonably prejudiced and emotional in the group. The chairman, after all, is the solution of an emotional situation in the group. It makes a great difference as to how an explosion of strong emotion is received by the chairman. If he accepts it as a matter of course and in objective fashion draws up the emotion to himself, so that through the transforming of his restatement and of his attitude the discussion goes forward, even the most hectic emotion can be met successfully.

The chairman can be of help, also, in mediating certain attitudes on the part of the group which make frank discussion difficult. If the group shows that it is shocked or violently aroused in opposition to any point of view, persons holding this point of view become sullen and remain quiet, if they are more reticent individuals; and violently argumentative, if of the more aggressive type. The chairman has no final control over the group but he can help the attitude of receptivity and fair mindedness. The chairman has to give attention to securing for unpopular minority attitudes a fair chance, and to preventing strong and aggressive majorities, or even personalities, from dominating the group thinking. There is a question whether distinctly different attitudes get a fair show. If they are contrary to the general temper of the group, they may get "laughed out of court" or be regarded as quite off the point. On the other hand, a person who is very aggressive may succeed in "putting across" in discussion his own point of view if the suggestion is made at the right moment and if two or three other persons join with him in an emotional appeal. Indeed, the question has been raised whether the more fair-minded the group, the more likely it will be that a strong personality will succeed in influencing it unduly. This can be prevented only by the sense of fairness and understanding of the process possessed by all of the group and by the action of the chairman in delaying decision until the more aggressive persons are checked by the discussion and the minority opinions really have a chance. The right sort of a chairman sees to it that the time is not monopolized by further reinforcement of a popular point of view, but that a genuine opportunity is given to the minority.

The suggestions here made are in direct opposition to advice frequently given; but they are based on experience. It has frequently been assumed, in the relationships of two individuals, or in a larger or smaller group where there is prejudice and emotion, that the differences must be smoothed over, feelings must not be expressed, and fellowship must be maintained

within the range of comity and agreement. Progress will be made, however, in proportion as suspicion is expressed and as strong emotions are released. But this must happen in a setting where there are bonds which hold the group together.

CHAPTER XIII

CONDITIONS FOR CREATIVE DISCUSSION

It may seem obvious to say that the first essential to a creative discussion is that there should be something to be discussed. But so many groups are worthless because there is nothing of any concern to be considered, that it is necessary to insist upon this. If the group discussion is to be vital, the question must be one pertinent to the life of the group and of real concern to the group members. Unless it is something on which there is an honest difference of opinion, or on which the members of the group are puzzled and concerning which the way out is not clear, there is no need for a discussion. For some groups of boys to consider whether they should love their parents would not arouse a very lively participation; but for a group, chafing under home authority and actually considering whether to break with the home, a discussion on whether a boy is justified in running away from home would be of vital concern.

A second essential is really a corollary to the first; namely, an earnest desire on the part of the group to find an answer to the question, and a willingness to work with others in the group in seeking to arrive at a solution. This desire and this willingness cannot be assumed as true of all groups. A person may come to a meeting doubtful whether he wishes to do anything about the question and unwilling to cooperate with others about it, even though it is a question of real concern. The desire and the willingness may be developed during the discussion.

A third essential is that all the parties who are involved in the question shall be present in the discussion. This has already been recognized as essential in the consideration of questions where there is strong emotion. But it is important in all

questions, if creative results are to be secured. The reason for this is evident. To have only one party to an issue present results in a lack of reality in the discussion because it is not true to the actual situation being considered. All parties are involved in the decision and they must be represented in the discussion if the result is to be satisfactory or trustworthy. To try to decide what shall be the relations between white and colored races in a certain situation with only the colored or the white race present; to try to decide what shall be the answer to an industrial difficulty at a meeting made up only of capital or only of labor; to determine the way out on a discussion between fundamentalism and modernism when only one party to the difficulty is represented means that the decision will be made without taking into account completely the opposing viewpoints and that it is bound to be unsatisfactory to the group not represented.

A Common Interest or Purpose

A fourth essential is some common interest or concern which binds the group together. If there is some bond commanding enough to make the group members feel, despite their differences, that they must find a common solution, they are more likely to be willing to have the patience necessary to reach a creative conclusion. This must be more inclusive than the special interests of the contending parties. It must be large enough to bridge the contending points of view and make integration possible. Where there are conflicting interests, no conclusion will be reached until this higher interest becomes the controlling motive. This may be simply a recognition that to continue the conflict hurts the interests of both sides. For instance, if there is a conflict between capital and labor as to wages and hours, just so long as it is a contest in which labor seeks to get as much in wages as possible from capital, and capital seeks to grant as little as possible, there will be a fight until one party or the other yields. If, even so much of a higher motive is recognized, as that the interests of both

capital and labor depend upon the success of the business and that this deadlock is hurting the business, around the recognition of this common interest there may come a willingness to consider adjustments. If, as occurred in the crises of war, both labor and capital recognize that the interests of the nation are involved in the controversy, and that the continuation of the struggle endangers the nation's welfare, there is still more hope of settlement. If the public comes to see that the contest is hurting the public welfare and public opinion is brought to bear, this becomes the incentive for an adjustment. At the European Student Relief Conference at Parad, Hungary, with the German and the French representatives meeting together for the first time since the World War, and with bitter feeling among the minority groups there represented, there seemed no way of reconciling certain conflicts. Student delegates from the various nations refused to give up until some integration was found, because they said that if they could not find a way through on this issue, there was no hope for solving the more difficult political questions on a peaceful basis.

At other times some common purpose forms the basis for integration. The persons in the United States who were interested in the elimination of war were, for a considerable time, divided into contending parties around their own particular solutions of the question. Some were for the outlawry of war; others for the World Court; some for the League of Nations, and others for pacifism. Anamalous as it sounds, these advocates of peace were contending with each other in the effort to secure the adoption of their particular solutions for securing peace. As they came to realize how serious it was for those who were seeking to eliminate war not to be able to reconcile their own differences, they came together for several days of conference. At frequent times during this conference, the gathering seemed about to break up because of their irreconcilable differences; but the fact that to break up would hurt the cause in which they were all sincerely interested led

them to work together until a cooperative arrangement was discovered.

Sometimes this common bond may be an organization to which the contending parties belong and regarding whose mission they have some conviction. Sheer exhaustion, it is true, was one element in the breaking of the deadlock in the Democratic Convention in 1924. But even this did not seem to be effective until it became evident that the Democratic party was in danger of being wrecked. When the appeal of the welfare of the party gained control, the contending factions finally yielded. Many a church assembly, on a seemingly impossible dispute, has come to agreement in the interests of the welfare of the church.

It is perfectly evident what happens when this more inclusive bond takes control. The persons in the group come to see that not only will the cause in which they believe be harmed, but that even the particular interests in which they are most concerned cannot be conserved except as some integration of contending points of view takes place. Further, the attention is shifted from an attempt to win the particular party interest against its opponent to the common purpose in which both are involved. There is in the control of this more inclusive purpose a recognition that the welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all. It is not enough that this common bond shall be there. It must be felt by all parties to the discussion.

In this development of the bonds which unite, it is important to meet any fears within the group. Frequently, a discussion fails to move forward creatively because of defence attitudes. Members of the group fear lest interests in which they are concerned will be sacrificed or harm will be done to causes in which they believe. This is particularly true of minorities, who are likely to feel that their interests will be overlooked in the discussion. It is essential, therefore, that the group shall be eager to conserve the interests and to meet the fears of all those represented, and to reach a decision in which all can join

wholeheartedly. This means that the group will be willing to postpone votes, to carry on further investigations, to make any legitimate adjustment to reach a group conviction.

In a meeting of a group where an international conference was being planned, there were two very divergent points of view as to the emphasis and the method of the conference. There was a genuine concern on the part of the delegates from some of the countries lest the conference in its method and emphasis might be harmful to the young men and boys of their particular countries. In conferring together, the chairman suggested that, instead of seeking to have one or the other points of view win by a majority, the group work cooperatively in open discussion to make that plan which would meet the honest fears, safeguard the divergent interests, meet the minority viewpoints, and build into the final plan the points of emphasis of all. This suggestion came as a surprise to most of those in the conference. They had been accustomed to a method in which small committees would meet together privately to frame up a compromise course of action which could secure a majority vote. Under this cooperative approach, however, little by little, this became a creative group working in real fellowship.

Fellowship amidst Varying Convictions

It has been assumed that the greatest fellowship comes between people who are like-minded. Consequently, we tend to associate with persons who have the same interests and who look at life in the same way that we do. This is a relationship easier to secure, but is not the highest form of fellowship. The fellowship out of which creative results emerge is that between persons concerned in the same areas of life, but who have varying attitudes, convictions, and experiences. Such a fellowship is an achievement worth while because it demands, first, mutual respect; second, an attempt to understand the other person's point of view; and third, an effort to find a way out in which all can join whole heartedly. It is creative be-

cause of the very richness of the contribution of diverse points of view. People of different races, of different cultures, of different religions, provided they take the trouble to understand each other's viewpoints, and in mutual respect attempt to find their way out on common problems, have achieved the greatest fellowship. The greatest diversity is desirable providing there is a purpose which includes all.

It is because the parties to some religious controversies have been unwilling to recognize the sincerity of their opponents in seeking the same goals that the contentions are so acrimonious and disastrous. It is because no such common bond has been established between capital and labor, that labor difficulties are so hard to settle. It is because the parties to the Negro problem are commencing to recognize their common concerns and to grant the sincerity of both sides and to confer together in interracial councils, that progress is being made. This fellowship was well illustrated in an international conference where the delegates from many nations, east and west, were divided both in theological belief and program emphasis.

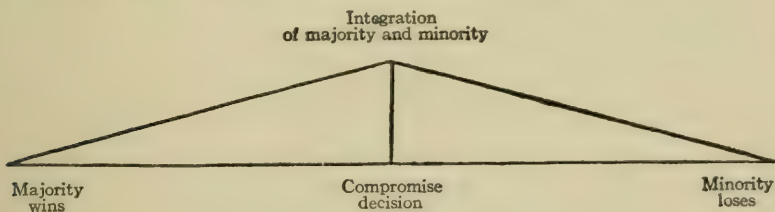
This is well stated in the report of an assembly where this spirit was achieved.

A word should be said about the spirit of the discussions. Ordinarily, where questions on which there are wide differences of opinion and practice are to be discussed, effort is made to minimize the differences and to see if it is not possible to unite upon some neutral position. Such a procedure results in conclusions which are more or less a compromise and which never completely satisfy any group. More than this, it fails to build into the conclusion the most constructive experience and the strongest convictions of persons of the different viewpoints. The conference was conducted on a principle directly opposite. The effort was made to bring out into the open frankly the varying points of view and the differing practices. To reveal rather than cover over conflicts and to get each viewpoint represented with the emotional glow from the presentation of a person who genuinely believed in it were attempted.

A second element was provided. To develop conflicting points of view would result merely in argument and might even cause

the disruption of the conference unless a spirit of fellowship could be developed. So, in the second place, the conference was conducted in this spirit of fellowship. Each person was encouraged to state his own point of view with clearness and conviction, but, on the other hand, each person was asked to listen to the points of view of others to learn what they might contribute to the conclusions. There was a feeling that the greatest effectiveness would be secured, not by one side defeating the other, but by securing a conclusion which would embody the very best contribution of all and which would not involve compromise. In this attempt to understand one another in a spirit of mutual respect, modifications of opinion took place and the conclusions represented real integrations because they gathered up those things which were of most concern to all the delegates.

The results possible in a discussion are illustrated in the following diagram. The majority may win, the minority lose. There may be a compromise decision which means that the concerns or convictions of neither group are met. There may be an integration which involves a creative result in which the decision is raised above that of either majority or minority and in which the concerns and interests of both are conserved.



Group Thinking as Worship

This creative result will take place in proportion as the group has reached in its discussions the spirit of worship, whether or not it is a religious group and uses this term. What happens is that a truly spiritual atmosphere pervades the group process. The essential difference between a group discussion which is truly religious and one which is irreligious is at this point; that, in a discussion which is religious, the group is earnestly seeking to find in any situation that which repre-

sents for that group the highest and best that they know or can discover. Any search which comes to be of supreme importance and to which the group is willing to give itself with complete abandon represents a loyalty essentially religious. For many groups this highest and best is phrased in terms of some social goal, such as human welfare, race equality, fraternity between the nations, the labor international. For many persons who profess religion, these values and purposes are personalized in their conception of Jesus and they call them Jesus' way of life; or in their ideas of God and they call them the will of God. But whether in these more social or more personal terms, whether in a theistic or non-theistic conception, psychologically the same thing is happening. A group reaches the spiritual plane when it is conducting its discussion in a recognition of and a search to conserve the very highest and best the group knows.

A direct word must be said to certain organized religious groupings at this point. It is not enough to secure such results that the meeting shall be opened with a worship feature. Frequently business and other meetings have a period of devotions at the beginning and then the balance of the meeting is conducted without reference to the attitude which was assumed and the power which was invoked in the opening period. It is as if they paid their respects to the Lord and then allowed trivial and contentious elements to dominate the rest of the meeting. No such divorce of the spirit of worship and the process of discussion is possible, if there are to be creative results. Whatever may be done regarding the opening devotional period, it is only as the spirit of worship permeates the entire discussion that something creative takes place. Certainly, under these circumstances the entire discussion may be called religious. When a group is seeking most earnestly to find what is best or truest to their highest conception; and when they are doing this in a situation of real concern in a spirit of fellowship, there is indeed a high level of spiritual experience.

The group becomes dynamically spiritual when the members are willing not only to search for a course of action which will be true to the highest values they have recognized and the deepest meanings that have come in life for them, but when they are willing to reexamine these values and search for still higher and better purposes. To be truly spiritual, values are not only used as tests of ways of acting but what Professor Coe¹ calls the "re-evaluation of values" takes place. For those who believe in spiritual resources, both within and beyond themselves, such a process makes possible the release of these resources in direct relation to immediate and important concerns. Indeed, the culmination of this dynamic process is found when a group is facing a situation in which they are baffled, in which they do not see the way out, which seems to them beyond their power. Something happens which is in the highest sense dynamic when a group in fellowship and in confidence lays hold of the previously unreleased resources within itself. At such a time there comes insight as to what to do, and strength and ability to carry out the purposes, which represent more than the mathematical total of the resources of the members of the group when taken separately. Such release of spiritual power is a manifestation of the divine resources all around us which are at the command of all those who in a group process meet the conditions of spiritual creativity.

This is an experience found in various areas of life. The reverent scientist who works in his laboratory, in his earnest search for the cure for disease or for an invention that will meet some practical need, finds that a new insight comes to him. It is out of a similar struggle that the great musical composition is born. Each in his realm is engaged in the same process as the group, the members of which are meeting a race or industrial, family or community situation of concern.

Group thinking can meet these conditions of creative results. It represents a method by which a group of persons facing a common situation or problem of concern may work

¹ Coe, George A., "The Psychology of Religion," Chap. XIII.

cooperatively for a solution which meets the values that to them are worth while, and may in the process, search for and discover higher standards and more worth-while purposes. Some people feel that there are creative possibilities in a group process even greater than those possibilities in a person searching alone, and that, therefore, group discussion offers in an especial degree the basis for spiritual creativity. Something especially dynamic seems to happen in the fellowship of a group the members of which are bound by a common concern and have a mutual love one for the other.

These conditions can be met. In groups with widely differing points of view and even with distrust at the first, fellowship is achieved. If the chairman of the discussion and those who are responsible for it wish, they can seek to secure, and usually succeed in securing, the conditions of creativity. In a number of gatherings, local, sectional, and national, where real issues were at stake, the very essence of worship has been secured in the discussions themselves, and as a result something creative has happened both in the conclusions reached and in the experience of the individuals of the group.

APPENDIX I

LEGISLATIVE BODIES ON A GROUP THINKING BASIS

The method used in most assemblies gathered for legislative action is to refer to committees the investigation of the questions and the determination of what should be done, and then to ask these committees to bring proposals to the main body. If there is some school matter which demands the vote of the people in a town, the school board investigates the situation and then brings the proposition to the people. The same thing happens in a church. The minister or some small committee investigates and brings something for adoption to the church as a whole. This is also true of national legislative assemblies. Most of the discussion of the questions takes place in committees. Usually, the main body keeps itself busy with receiving fraternal delegates, hearing addresses on general subjects, or clearing routine matters until the committees have time to complete their deliberations.

The reason for this procedure is evident. There are so many difficulties to be overcome in throwing the matter open for general discussion that this has been adopted as the only possible way of ever securing action. The attitude is well illustrated by an article by Elmer Davis, in the *New York Times*, concerning the Democratic Convention of 1924 which is headed "They are Glad to Rest while the 'Big Men' Work." It was at the time in the convention when Senator Taggart moved "that at the adjournment of this session the chairman of the national committee and the chairman of this convention call a conference of the representatives of candidates for the purpose of reaching an understanding."

Mr. Davis reports:

A sigh of relief drifted up from the hall to the speaker's stand.

This meant, of course, the abdication of the convention, and the resignation of its functions to a committee. But as all legislative bodies learn, sooner or later, so this Democratic convention has learned that business has to be done in committee if one wants secrecy and dispatch, and then merely be ratified afterward on the floor.

Some of the delegates may not have liked it, perhaps, but not a voice was raised in opposition to the chorus of ayes on Mr. Taggart's motion. Once more pure democracy, or the form of pure democracy, which always is the cloak for some sort of oligarchy, had been replaced by representative government where the oligarchy could frankly function in the open with the body of electors reserving the right to veto its decision.

One wonders how many Democrats realized that they were acting out a pageant illustrating constitutional history. Probably most of them thought of nothing but that at last they might get something done, which has after all been the motivating force in the development of all constitutions.

This difficulty is not because democratic processes necessarily are ineffective, but because no machinery has been developed for helping large groups make up their minds. Indeed, the very technique of a legislative assembly is that of battle. It is a contest between those who are seeking to have a motion win and those who oppose it. In this battle the ammunition is talk, but many types of instruments are available in which to use it. All sorts of parliamentary tactics are resorted to: amend, postpone, lay on the table, previous question. The opposition uses every device of parliamentary procedure to delay action and prevent carrying of the motion; those advocating it use every method to force a vote and win a victory. Robert's "Rules of Order" are the rules of a fight; they are intended to prevent unfair advantage and to give the minority a fighting chance. But parliamentary law is not intended for cooperative discussion. Just as soon as a discussional assembly starts to make motions and amendments and take votes, its entire mood changes. All that is necessary in order to realize the truth of this is to sit in any legislative assembly or read the accounts of such a gathering. When a committee

reports, there is little real effort to secure consideration of the issues, but rather the chairman leads a fight, friendly though it may be, for the adoption of his committee's report, and he and those who favor it use every device of debate and parliamentary law to accomplish it.

The able record of one such national denominational conference is full of these evidences of conflict. After considerable debate on an important proposal of a committee's report, the record reads:

The parliamentary situation became complex, but the well-poised _____, chairman, came through, and the substitute motion went to the table, together with a later motion. A new amendment from Mr. _____ proposed to substitute, etc. This was tabled. The previous question was ordered and Doctor _____ bowed his shoulders to the load of convincing the assembly that it should decide the matter here and now and not move or vote to recommit. . . . The speech, perhaps the greatest effort of his forensic career, ended in a gust of emotion with a stirring appeal to the church to beat no retreat, but to hold and reenforce the lines. Under the spell of his words the vote to recommit was tabled; 461 for, 344 against, and the report remained for action. Then parliamentary tactics came into play. The call for aye and no vote was not sustained. But Doctor _____ had the question divided. . . . Motions, counter motions, and points of order were shot at the chair in bewildering succession. But the chairman was not thrown off his balance. Doctor _____'s motion to recommit the first part was tabled by a majority of twelve. Straightway the first section was approved. The resistance crumbled and the remainder was approved by a show of hands. Then the floor and galleries drew a long breath.

On all sides it was agreed that the victory of the chairman of the committee was the most brilliant of his forensic career, but it had taken every smooth stone in David's scrip to lay the giant low. And giant it is, this feeling against what passes as "officialdom." It has shown its strength, its purpose, and withal its good humor. And it is not dead, despite today's losing battle. In the afternoon when Doctor _____ took the chair of the committee, the man who had led the effort to recommit was the first on the floor to move a vote of congratulation to the victorious leader,

and the committee, though as sharply divided as the conference on the main question, showed its largeness of heart by adopting it with fervent enthusiasm.

In the same conference on a proposal for a creedal change, there was considerable debate. The following comment is made concerning the close of the debate:

Then Doctor _____ had the last word. Thoroughly aroused, he lashed the noisy shouters of "Vote, Vote," and bade them be gentlemen. The old man, eloquent, was never so brilliant as in these five minutes. He appealed to sentiment, to respect for law, to the sense of the unity of Christendom, to the integrity of this one statement in which all churches unite. His last sentence was a prayer that God might guide the conference in its decision. Under that spell, the vote was taken, and the creed was left inviolate.

From time to time the report shows the parliamentary battle:

Parliamentary tactics were resorted to. One delegate wanted an aye and no vote, but the call was not supported. Motions to table both reports failed. Then the majority report was divided and adopted by large majorities both piecemeal and all together.

. . . He intimated that a unanimous report would indicate that the special committee had been "packed." When he closed, fifty frantic men were thundering for recognition. Out of the report came the previous question and the decision of the conference to let the committee try its hand at putting into words the churches' new conscience on _____. When _____ laid down the gavel he was the hero of two battles. His unusual knowledge of the rules, his coolness under fire, and his imperturbable demeanor had protected the house, maintained order, and marked him as worthy and well qualified.

. . . By this time the previous question had gotten on and quelled debate on the amendment. Stung by swarms of points of order, the chairman had an uncomfortable time until suggestions from Doctors _____ and _____ extricated the conference from the parliamentary toils just before recess.

The previous question hamstrung the discussion which had promised a battle royal.

These are just extracts from daily accounts giving evidence

over and over again of the attempts to win by parliamentary tactics. When the political procedure is followed the whole process works toward giving standing or backing to a measure because of those who advocate it. For instance, speakers before hearings and on the main floor in many cases in one convention took pains to give their own standing before presenting their ideas. "I represent a large group of men who think —" or "In my twenty-five years of experience —" were characteristic comments. Such appeals imply that the speaker wants his ideas judged by their source. Infrequently did speakers offer facts which supported their ideas for their intrinsic worth. The very necessity of getting different reports presented by men who stand well before the group indicates that the ideas involved have not been the product of the thinking of the group.

The political procedure makes it extremely difficult for men to yield their point. When men are led to announce on the floor that they favor this or that conclusion, they have to explain both to themselves and to their friends why they have changed their minds. It is this which makes it difficult for conventions to reach conclusions which represent the results of creative thinking. Before a final plan can be reached all the efforts of the convention and its committees have to be given through long hours to harmonizing feelings which have been created out of the situation itself. As long as the political procedure, which consists essentially in marshalling men behind predetermined ideas, is characteristic of conventions, this struggle of emotions around personal "dignity" will be present.

The difficulty of the small-committee method is evident. Practically all of the constructive steps in the thinking process must be followed in the committee. There the situation is canvassed and the problem located; there the proposals as to what to do are examined and disagreements adjusted; there the conclusion is reached. It is only the adoption of this conclusion and the consideration of ways and means that come before the main assembly. The committee members have

made many adjustments in the process of the committee discussions. If they have come to a united conclusion, there has been opportunity for give and take. Indeed, they have found it necessary to adjust themselves emotionally if they are back of the proposition. What has taken many hours in the smaller group, the main assembly has no opportunity to do. It is evident that the convention must have opportunity to go through somewhat the same procedure that the individual or the committee goes through, and yet in the economy of time some method must be discovered to shortcut this process, and in the interests of sound conclusions, some way must be found to make evidence and points of view quickly available to the larger body.

The function of the committees in a convention should be to discover and report issues to the general body. After a brief period, every committee should be in a position to report to the main convention a few clear-cut issues which seem to grow out of its work. These could be presented for general discussion as problems; various points of view might then be brought out in general discussion on the main floor in full hearing of everyone, each suggestion having a chance to be weighed and judged in a preliminary fashion by the entire body. This procedure would mean that a convention would first be made conscious of its problems and then seek, in light of all the facts, to find ways of answering them. Proposals would be the culmination, rather than the beginning, of the process. The issue itself would first be discussed without definite motions and then would be referred to the committee for phrasing a proposal or proposals in the light of the discussion. These could be modified again after discussion by the convention. This would substitute constructive thinking for the present combat of debate and the procedure of group thinking for parliamentary tactics and Robert's "Rules of Order."

On questions on which there is need for preliminary investigation, commissions to investigate particular questions are sometimes valuable, but such commissions would have

functions different from those which they usually assume. Ordinarily, such a commission has investigated the situation, examined various proposals, weighed the evidence, considered values, and has come to the convention with an authoritative recommendation. In short, the commission has really done the work of the convention and asks only that the convention shall approve the conclusions. The assembly discusses the proposal rather than the real issues and does little more than modify and reject or adopt the proposals. At the Edinburgh World Conference, in 1910, the discussion, instead of being fundamentally on the issues, became more and more editorial work in which minor changes were made in the documents. This happened at the Boys' Work Assembly, at Blue Ridge, in 1920, where a great deal of the debate was around minor changes in the printed report.

Under a group thinking process the committee or commission is no less important. Its business is to study the question, discover probable proposals, and gather the necessary information, not in order to form its own conclusion, but in order to get this material before the convention as a whole in such a way as will enable the members to discuss the question fruitfully and to come to their own conclusions. The commission's business is to see that the necessary information is available and that various points of view are represented in the discussion. In short, the commission becomes responsible for the preliminary preparation and should cooperate in the discussions as experts in furnishing the necessary data. The proposals and conclusions will be the results of the discussion.

Comments on a conference, planned on this basis, indicate the sort of procedure which would be necessary if this were to be the method used.

This conference was planned to give the fullest opportunity to the delegates to think together and come to their own conclusions on the problems being discussed. . . . If the discussions were to be the most rewarding, it was evident that the attention must be focused upon the actual field situations and the real problems, and, further, that there should be made available for considera-

tion in the conference the varying practices of the Associations, both successful and unsuccessful. These were provided for by the reports of the commissions, the members of which made a survey of the field situations and gathered material indicating the prevailing practice. By working in this manner the commissions facilitated the discussions of the conference. Instead of doing the thinking for the conference and bringing in proposals to be acted upon, as most commissions have done, and thus leaving it to the conference merely to debate as to modification and acceptance or rejection of these conclusions, the commissions furnished the data as to situations, problems, and prevailing practice, as the basis for the conference to do its own thinking and to come to its own conclusions.

It was recognized that such discussion involves a procedure. In a preliminary fashion this was provided for by the commission reports as the syllabi in connection with these furnished the basis for analyzing and developing the problems for the pre-conference discussions of the various Associations. During the conference itself the chairman of the discussions met with each of the commissions and revised the set of questions in the light of this preliminary experience. An attempt was made to reach conclusions which would embody the best practice and the lessons out of experience and represent a united Association philosophy on which all could agree. Where, however, there were differences of conviction and practice, these were recognized so that out of the experiment and experience of the months ahead the delegates might come to the next assembly with further light on their problems. These conclusions were determined, not by formal vote, but by the summaries of the chairman, in which he sought to state from time to time the "sense of the meeting" as it had developed. The delegates objected to or modified the summaries as they were made until they represented the real mind of the conference.

It is possible to discuss questions informally either in a representative convention or in a local organization, some time before they have reached the legislative stage. This plan was followed at the national convention of the Young Women's Christian Association, at Milwaukee. Part of the sessions were legislative, the others were given to group thinking on questions of policy which had not yet reached the legis-

lative stage. A very practical modification can, therefore, be followed in any legislative assembly which is willing to experiment with cooperative methods. This is to discuss any questions informally and without motions before they reach the final legislative stage. Suggestions on such a procedure are given in the next chapter. When the discussion has reached a stage where the mind of the group is clear, then this can be phrased in a motion and passed as the will of the assembly. The chairman of the discussion may turn the meeting over to the business chairman for this action.

APPENDIX II

CONDUCTING A CONFERENCE OR CONVENTION ON A GROUP THINKING BASIS

A large gathering has seemed to offer insuperable difficulties to any kind of democratic participation. Hearing is not the only problem involved. This might partially be met by amplifiers with microphones in various places in the hall. A more serious difficulty is that only a few persons can take part in an hour. The significance of group discussion grows out of the fact that it substitutes conversation on the question point by point for long speeches, in which a person sets forth at length his entire viewpoint on an issue. It is in this give and take that convictions are modified and new possibilities developed. In a large assembly, the more timid persons are likely to keep quiet altogether and the more aggressive leaders tend to monopolize participation and to give long addresses. Thus, a discussional assembly has come to differ from a speaking convention only in that there are a few leaders rather than one, attempting to make up the minds of the many.

This difficulty has been met in several conferences and conventions by dividing into small sections or groups for discussion and alternating these with general assembly sessions. By various devices for division, to be described later, each group is made a representative sampling of the convention or conference as a whole. The division into groups enables every person to have a chance to take part in the discussion. Since the division into groups is for convenience of discussion, usually all the groups discuss the same general questions and the unity of the convention is not unduly destroyed. The results of these small groups are gathered up in the larger assembly.

If group thinking is to take place, more is involved than an alternation of group meetings with the large assembly gatherings. The program itself must follow the procedure of

group thinking. In order to accomplish this, several conferences have been planned as a unit, so that the entire gathering in large assembly and group discussions first gave its attention to defining the problem, then to consideration of what to do, and finally to ways and means. In such a gathering the platform addresses become resources for the discussion, directly related to the group thinking procedure, as outlined in the chapter on "The Place of Lectures and Addresses in Group Thinking." The following would in general show the plan of meetings on any one topic of a conference. If several topics are covered this plan of group thinking would be repeated for each. The amount of time for each item would depend upon the topic and upon the length of the conference.

1. *General assembly meeting* to set the problem and to determine the general area of discussion for the small groups.

2. *Small groups*, each a representative sampling of the whole, to get everybody into the discussion, to describe situations, to bring out important factors and to be sure that the issues are defined.

3. *Large assembly for reports* of the small group discussions, for summarizing of the central problem or problems and giving the most relevant factors.

4. *Address or addresses* by persons with wide experience in relation to the problem, to set the immediate problem in its larger setting.

5. *Large assembly*, for main proposals on what to do about the issue with preliminary presentation by delegates of reasons for each.

6. *Small groups* to discuss these proposals and particularly to consider the reasons for each, to develop agreements and determine differences of fact and viewpoint.

7. *Large assembly* to report the results of the small groups and discuss the proposals further, but particularly to summarize the differences in fact and point of view which have emerged.

8. *Informational addresses* giving such expert data as may be necessary on differences of fact and for presentation of points of view widely held which may not be sufficiently represented in the group discussions.

9. *Small group discussions* in which the underlying issues of fact and viewpoint are discussed in the light of the addresses. Effort is made in these groups to determine what course of action should be taken.

10. *Large assembly* to summarize the results of the small groups and to secure an integration of points of view in as united a conclusion as possible.

11. *Discussion groups divided by delegations or by types of responsibility* for discussion of ways and means of putting the conclusions of the assembly into practice.

12. *Assembly* to gather up the results of the small groups and to present any general proposals on ways and means.

It will thus be seen that the division into small groups is used in order to give every delegate a chance to discuss the question. Each small group becomes really a typical section of the convention as a whole. The large assembly is used for gathering up the results of the small group discussions, for carrying on the discussion in forum fashion, and for hearing addresses on the questions before the groups. The division by types of responsibility is to secure a discussion of ways and means by the groups responsible for carrying the conclusions into practice.

It may help if several factors essential to the success of a large gathering on a group-thinking basis are considered more in detail.

Preliminary Preparation

The shift from a speaking to a group-thinking convention or conference involves more than a unified program following a group-thinking procedure. It means a program built on the problems and interests of the delegates rather than a series of

messages on what certain leaders consider important. This places a new importance on discovering the mind of the delegates who are coming to the conference and on knowing the situations and problems they are facing. The conference then is a place where the delegates can receive help on their personal or organization problems. If the conference is to be thus directly related to the everyday experience of the delegates some method becomes necessary for knowing in advance who are coming to the conference and what are their most insistent problems. These delegates will share experience and conviction most effectively if they have had a chance to help in deciding the program and to discuss the questions before going to the conference. In short, the conference will be most effective if it is a part of the before-conference and after-conference experience of the delegates. It becomes then an item—an exceptionally important item, it is true, but still an item—in the growing experience and responsibilities of the delegates.

There are a number of methods by which the delegates may participate in determining the questions to be considered in the program and in discussing these before the conference. The simplest method of determining the problems is to send out a questionnaire or series of tests in advance. These may be filled out by individual delegates or by groups after discussion of the questions. The Helsingfors Inquiry, carried on for two years in advance of the World Conference of the Young Men's Christian Association at Helsingfors, included an outline of several hundred questions in regard to the social and religious problems of boys, young men, and men. These were sent to the Associations in fifty nations for reply by individuals and groups. The returns were sent to the central office at Geneva, Switzerland, and the results studied, compiled and published in two documents which were mailed to all the delegates in advance of the conference. These became the background of the thought of the conference and helped in the determination of the areas of exploration in the conference itself.

In the same way, test material can be sent out in advance to "smoke out" viewpoint and determine areas of problem. Such a test, in the form of Watson's "Public Opinion Tests" (see p. 123), was sent out to the delegates who were to come to the First Conference on Conferences to determine the areas of difficulty. Those matters on which the delegates showed wide variance of conviction or practice or showed themselves to be puzzled or undetermined were assumed to be the areas of conflict and the basis of discussion. A similar method was used by Doctor Watson in his preliminary investigation of public opinion on problems of the Pacific Basin in preparation for the Institute of Pacific Relations of 1927.¹

A third method is to ask the prospective delegates directly, by sending out a number of samples to be checked and seeing which received the greatest number of votes, what questions they wish discussed. So in advance of the Vassar Conference, which was to deal with social and international affairs, a card like the following was sent out:

VASSAR INSTITUTE

(PLEASE CHECK THE FIVE PROBLEMS IN WHICH YOU ARE MOST INTERESTED)

- ...The coming of modern industrialism to the Orient.
- ...The non-cooperative movement in India.
- ...The significance of the woman movement in the Far East.
- ...Race relations in the United States.
- ...The policy of the United States in regard to Mexico.
- ...The movement for independence in the Philippines.
- ...The Monroe Doctrine as it affects the relations of the United States with Latin American countries.
- ...Our responsibility toward the problem of political stability in China.
- ...The immigration policy of the United States.
- ...The position of the United States in regard to the League of Nations.
- ...The World Court as a step towards international cooperation.
- ...The outlawry of war as a way to peace.
- ...The humanitarian problems of the world, as drugs, traffic in women and children, disease, etc.
- ...The attitude of western nations towards backward nations.
- ...Economic imperialism as an obstacle to world peace.
- ...Mandates and their obligations.
- ...The place of the United States in the economic readjustment of Europe.

A fourth method is to hold in advance of the conference a

¹Watson, Goodwin B., "Orient and Occident," published by The Inquiry.

consultation with leaders who are supposed to know the delegates, their problems and their needs. There has sometimes been a preliminary consultation of leaders and the program has been more definitely outlined by these persons. One of the most interesting was the Leaders' Conference at Geneva, Switzerland, six months in advance of the World Conference of the Young Men's Christian Association. A number of nations were represented and final plans were made for the conference. This group heard reports on the questionnaire material which had been received from all parts of the world; indicated what they felt to be the problems of youth and of the Associations in their respective nations; chose the areas of discussion; and prepared a syllabus of questions to be sent to the delegates and to form the basis for the final syllabus used in the conference.

The defect in this method is at once evident. Although leaders are mature persons, they are sometimes less acquainted with the problems of their constituency than they think. They are influenced by what they feel their constituency ought to be interested in. In advance of the American Country Life Association Conference at Columbus, Ohio, on "Religion in Country Life," a representative group of leaders said that the conference would be particularly interested in the relation of the country church to the Cooperatives and the effect of the spiritual contribution of the Cooperatives upon the mission of the church in the country. As a matter of fact, the delegates proved to be little interested in this problem. They were entirely committed to the country church and wanted the conference to discuss how the country church, which they recognized as inefficient, could be made more effective.

A fifth method obviates the defects of the fourth, provided it proves practicable. This is to hold several preliminary discussions of a representative sampling of the delegates to the conference. If it is to be a national convention, and these smaller conferences can be held in various sections of the country, it will be more possible to determine what should be done in the national gathering. If it is to be a local or state

gathering, then a selected but representative group of the delegates can meet to consider the program.

A sixth method combines preliminary discussion of the problems with a determination of the questions for discussion. This was the plan used in connection with the Boys' Work Assembly at Estes Park.. The purpose of the assembly was to give an opportunity for the boys' workers to plan the next steps in the development of boys' work. To this end the local associations in various parts of the country were asked to participate in a year's preliminary discussion of the problems of boys' work. Outlines were sent out by the program committee for discussion in the main areas where such problems as those of membership, leadership, and program had to be faced. These were prepared with report sheets so that certain definitions of problem and tentative conclusions of the discussions could be easily and uniformly reported to the national headquarters.

In the light of the returns from the first set of outlines a second set of discussions was prepared and used in the various associations. The results of these preliminary discussions were summarized and used in the final plans for the program. They were also made into exhibit form for the delegates and a fuller report was made by the director of the discussions at the opening of the assembly. Through this preliminary preparation the delegates came to the conference with the problems fairly well defined and with some preliminary discussion of what to do, and, therefore, it was possible to attack the questions more directly than otherwise could have been done.

Sometimes preliminary discussion of the problems to be considered at the conference is secured by the use of a discussion syllabus. Thus in advance of the Student Volunteer Convention, at Indianapolis, the students in the various colleges used special discussion outlines on racial, economic, and other problems to be considered in the convention.

Whatever preliminary experience the chairmen can have in leading groups of a composition similar to the convention and

whatever study they can make of the questions to be discussed will add to their effectiveness in the conference or convention.

The Conference or Convention Itself

The integration of the small group and the large assembly sessions and the success of the group-thinking process depends on having a director for the entire conference. He should be a person skilled in the leadership of discussion so he can be chairman of the all-conference sessions. He must know how to train the chairmen of the discussion groups and be able to cooperate with the responsible leaders in the development of the program. He must also meet with the chairmen and recorders in planning the group discussions and their integration with the main assembly. He is responsible for the summarizing process and may himself make the general summaries. He should have associated with him for each group a chairman of discussion and a recorder who is responsible for keeping careful notes of what goes on in the discussion. It is, of course, better if these chairmen are experienced; but if they have the qualifications which would make them successful chairmen had they the training and experience, the director can help them learn the group process as they work with him in the conference.

Provision must be made for the conference program to be planned session by session and adjusted to the developing needs of the conference. This means that there needs to be substituted for what is ordinarily known as the "business committee" a council of leaders and representative delegates. These leaders would include the chairmen of discussions, the speakers, and the executives of the conference. But there needs to be in this council a representative sampling of the delegates. This group needs to meet at the close of every session to gather up the results, to appraise where the gathering is in the progress of its thinking, and to make plans for the next sessions. Their purpose is to see to it that the delegates are freed for the discussion of the problems in which they

really are interested and are given a chance to do their own thinking. It is in such a group also that the developing convictions of the conference are recognized and gathered up in any summaries or conclusions.

There must be definite provision for relating the various sessions one to another and giving to the delegates an understanding of the continuity of the program. When the small groups meet, the chairmen will need to recognize the relation of these groups to what has preceded. The recorders in the groups will keep notes, and what has happened in the various groups needs to be reported in the next general session of the conference. If there is to be a meeting in which information is given, the questions which have emerged should be stated so that the speaker's relation to the conference is seen and so that the delegates have in mind the questions on which they wish help. The person responsible for this integration is really the director of discussions, but he will have the cooperation of the chairmen of the groups and the speakers.

Preliminary Training of Chairmen

The director should meet with the chairmen and recorders just in advance of the conference or convention for final preliminary preparation. The purpose is both to study together the questions which will be discussed in the conference and to become more skilled in the chairmanship of discussion. In this preliminary study under the guidance of the director, the chairmen and recorders make together preparation similar to that which they would make alone. In general, the procedure as outlined in Chap. VII is followed by the director in his guidance of this final preliminary preparation.

The preliminary preparation of the discussion chairmen at the Student Volunteer Convention, at Indianapolis, is a typical illustration. Since the opening addresses of the convention were to discuss industrial, racial, and international questions, and since the student delegates would be free to introduce other problems, there was an exceptional strain placed on the

fifty group leaders as there was no way of predicting which question any particular group would select. Where a definite question is to be discussed or one or two problems are determined, it is possible to make definite outlines for these two or three possibilities. But with such a range of possibility and with a particular desire not to influence the choices of the groups, no such definiteness in preparation was possible.

The leaders met with the directors of the discussion groups for fourteen hours just in advance of the convention. They were prepared not by lecture, but by the arduous labor of going through the processes through which they would take their groups until the technique of group thinking emerged. They met morning, afternoon, and evening, struggling to get a full understanding of the content which might be involved and the methods which would certainly be required.

Attention was first given to a wide survey of the field of interest in current questions of the college students, to come to an understanding of the range and types of problem which were likely to emerge. In this discussion questions were used by the director which would result in the chairmen's reporting situations and analyzing problems from the student point of view. The following were the questions used in this preliminary survey:

1. With what current questions and issues will these students come to the convention? On what degree and sort of expectancy can we count?
 - a. On how much and what sort of preconvention consideration of these questions can we count?
 - b. What issues will probably have emerged and become focalized? What have been the evident student interests?
 - c. What, if any, pre-convention sentiment will have been formed?
2. What things do you expect the addresses will bring?
3. Is our problem one of arousing students to issues or giving an atmosphere for an aid to discussions?
4. In what aspects of these questions is there evidence of interest? What evidence?

5. What manifestations of these issues within the range of student life are most acute?

These preliminary explorations resulted in the phrasing of some sixteen questions on current matters of importance to students. In order to have some practice in preparing questions the leaders then made outlines and phrased questions for discussion on several of these topics. These outlines were compared back and forth and on the basis of them, type questions were prepared which could be used with modifications in the course of the discussion, whatever the question which happened to be chosen by a group. It was also further decided not to attempt to complete the entire discussion on any issue in the first session, but simply to take the first steps of making the issue clear, defining the possibilities, and opening the way for securing further evidence as to fact or opinion. The following indicates somewhat the character of type questions which emerged and which were used in the first discussions:

1. In what specific ways has this problem arisen in student life? What evidences are there that this question is of concern to students?

2. What different suggestions are made as to what should be done about this issue? What have you known persons or groups actually to do in attempting to solve this problem? Why?

3. On which of these proposed courses of action or points of view would there be agreement? On which would there be disagreement? Why? Why do some hold that certain of the proposals are practicable and desirable? Why do others hold that they are impracticable and undesirable?

4. Which of these proposals are most in line with the spirit and teaching of Jesus? Which of these are contrary to His spirit?

5. Summarize the chief differences of opinion or conflicting points of view. Which of these are differences as to fact, as to what is true or is likely to happen as the result of the proposed forms of action? Which of these are differences of conviction as to what is desirable?

6. What further evidence either as to fact or as to conviction do we need?

After the first session of the discussion groups the leaders met again to plan for the second session of the groups. The fact that most of the groups had centered on the questions of war and race simplified preparation for the second session. The leaders first compared experiences to see what issues had emerged on the race and war questions, what were the conflicting points of view, what additional data were necessary. They decided to gather up whatever new evidence had been secured in the interim between the two discussions and complete the consideration of the main questions opened in the first discussion by the following additional questions of the type outline :

7. What new evidence, either as to fact or opinion, has been gained? What weight should be given to this evidence? Why? Where do we still lack adequate data? Are they available?

8. On what grounds is each conflicting point of view supported or opposed? How can these conflicting points of view be modified or integrated?

9. Summarize that on which we agree unitedly, that on which there are still differences of conviction, and state the chief points of view held.

10. Where and how may students take hold in carrying out their conclusions? What definite suggestions or proposals are there as to what we as students are going to do?

Special attention was given to the preparation for the second session to be sure that the chairmen worked with their groups in summarizing the actual state of conviction on each of the questions, at the close of the discussion, whether this was united expression or a variety of points of view.

For the World Conference of the Young Men's Christian Association, at Helsingfors, a two-day preliminary training conference was held under the guidance of the director of the discussion groups at the conference. Because of the long distances and the arrangements for national delegations to travel together, it was felt by many that it would be impracticable to secure such a preliminary meeting; but one hundred of the one hundred and fifty chairmen and recorders from forty nations

were present for this conference. Since for most of the leaders, as well as the delegates, group thinking itself as well as a discussion plan for a conference was entirely new, part of the time was given to an explanation of the plan of the conference and the psychology and philosophy on which it was based. Then the leaders and recorders, under the chairmanship of the director, discussed the syllabus for the first three days of the conference. This accomplished three things. Since the leaders were somewhat representative of the conference, this discussion gave them some idea of the probable content of the discussions and what would be the probable differences. It also gave some understanding of discussion technique, particularly as the director used this practice as the basis for suggestions on discussion chairmanship. The discussion also welded the leaders together into an international fellowship, and gave them a realization of the strategic responsibility they had in the conference, thus proving a spiritual preparation. At the close of this preliminary conference very definite final preparation was made for the first session of the discussion groups.

Similar preliminary training conferences of one-half day to a day and a half have been held in advance of a number of such conferences as the men's and women's student conferences, the conventions of the American Country Life Association, the Assembly of Association Workers with Boys, the National Council of the League of Women Voters and the national convention of the Young Women's Christian Association.

Meetings of Chairmen and Recorders during the Conference

This leaders group is by all odds the most important item in the machinery of the discussion conference or convention. Since each chairman has only fifteen to one hundred persons with whom to keep in touch, and many if not all of these are actually participating in each discussion, the chairmen and recorders know quite accurately the mind of the conference. It is better if a delegate from each group, the administrative

officers and the speakers join in the leaders' meetings. These meetings are, in many respects, the heart of the conference, the place where the pulse of the conference can be felt. The between-session leaders group has a threefold function. In this session it is possible to gather up the results of the discussion just closed in a summary of the present status of the thinking of the conference. Second, this group is able to indicate the places where the discussion cannot go forward without more facts, what the differences are, where additional presentation of point of view will be helpful, and thus can give to the speakers an understanding of what is needed next in the conference, from their addresses. They can also plan for the next discussion with a first-hand understanding of the situation in the conference itself so that the discussions will prove a next step in giving the delegates an opportunity to work on questions of concern. Incidentally, it may be remarked that while this group of leaders and recorders work long hours, they are more than rewarded by the growth which will come to them in this fellowship of service.

The Participation of the Delegates

The purpose of dividing into small groups is to give all the delegates a chance to participate. Even though at the Indianapolis Convention the groups were too large with one hundred in each, by actual count nearly 50 per cent of the five thousand delegates actually participated in the two sessions of the discussion groups. At Helsingfors, with longer time for the discussions and smaller groups, even with the difficulties of translation, most of the delegates participated in the discussions a number of times each day.

But provision must be made also that they shall participate, both directly and through their representatives, in the determination of the questions for discussion and in the shaping of the program. Usually the delegates have accepted what has been predetermined, and do not expect anything else. Just as soon as they become convinced that they really are going to

have a chance to participate with the leaders, they enter into the task with enthusiasm. The leaders conferences are the chief method. But all the methods which have been described for the preliminary determination of the problem can be used in the conference itself. There may be a chance to describe situations and determine problems in the larger assembly and in small groups. Questionnaires and tests of the sort which are sent out in advance can be used with the delegates. In this way the predictions of the pre-conference discussions can be checked.

In having delegates share in planning the conference, care must be taken to move rapidly enough so that not all of the time is given to locating the problem. This means that in the preliminary planning the area of discussion will need to be sufficiently delimited so there is some hope of both locating the issues and getting some help upon them within the time allotted for the conference. Several conferences have been in danger of being wrecked because the topic itself was too voluminous and had not been sufficiently defined in advance of the conference. The topic, for instance, for the F. C. S. O. and F. O. R. conference, at Columbus, Ohio, was "Western Civilization and the Religion of Jesus." An attempt was made to define this topic more completely in advance of the conference, but this failed. Further, the leaders felt that the conference should make a diagnosis of western civilization as to the places it is un-Christian and should attempt to determine the contribution of Christianity. This was the sort of problem, however, which would have been difficult to handle in a year's work in a university, and it was beyond the possibility of a four-day conference. The directors and leaders should have understood this difficulty and limited the area of discussion in advance of the conference, even though leaving the conference free to locate the problems within that area. A similar difficulty occurred in connection with the American Country Life Association Conference, at Richmond, Virginia, which had as its topic "Needed Improve-

ments in Country Life." This was too voluminous for consideration within a four-day conference.

The Speakers in a Group Thinking Conference

The necessity of choosing speakers who can and are willing to relate themselves to the developing thought of the conference or convention, must be evident. The relation of speeches and addresses to such a process has been discussed in Chap. X.

If the speakers are to be most helpful they should attend the meetings of the leaders so they will sense at first hand the status of the thinking in the conference and can make their addresses contribute directly. In any case, the director of the discussion process should consult with the speakers and they together plan in a preliminary way for what shall be given in the addresses. The addresses are thus integrated with the discussions and bear directly upon them.

Speakers differ in their adaptability to a group process. Miss Knights-Bruce, of England, at a Student Conference which had reached a stage where certain data in addresses were badly needed, revised her addresses entirely in the light of the description of the situation in the conference, given to her by the director of discussion, and as a result made a significant contribution to the thinking of the girls. She was able to do this because she was accustomed to speaking to labor audiences where she had to make her addresses meet the immediate situation and then have cross-questioning at the close. Many other speakers are cooperating in a similar manner in conferences and conventions. If the speaker is not adaptable, the director can find what he plans to say and adjust it to the program. Through sitting in on the meeting of leaders, through consultation with the director of the conference, through their personal conferences and informal consultation with delegates, the speakers must seek to understand the issues on which they may be of help and make their addresses contribute directly to the developing thought of the conference.

The summary of the status of the conference should be

made by the director before introducing the speaker and his introduction should indicate what the speaker is to present and its relation to the discussions. There must also be provision for the group leader to summarize or have summarized in the next session of the group the suggestions of the speakers and to have these considered. So in the consideration of the race question at a Boys Convention the Negro, Jewish, and Oriental points of view were presented from the platform and these were reviewed in the group to discover what the boys thought each speaker believed and then these points of view were discussed by the boys.

Other Sources of Information

Exhibit material represents a useful way of making information and points of view available. Even in the pressure of a conference it is possible to secure consultation of books with reports to the groups, where the references are definitely indicated.

Summaries of the Discussions

The summaries are secured in two ways; through the leaders' meeting and through written reports. At the American Country Life Conferences and at Estes Park, stenographers were available to whom a short picture of what had happened in his group was dictated by each recorder. At Helsingfors, the recorders wrote out their reports and handed them in at the Leaders' Meeting. A similar plan has been followed in several other conferences. On the basis of the verbal and written reports the summaries to the convention as a whole are made. Usually this summary can be given better by the director than anybody else as he is bound, because of his relationship to the leaders and the conference, to have the material in hand more adequately. Whoever does it, he must take responsibility for the summarizing process. The spoken summaries can be supplemented by written summaries mimeographed and distributed. At other times, outline sum-

maries can be placed on the blackboard to be used in connection with the spoken summary.

The way this worked out at the summarizing meeting at the Indianapolis convention may be of interest. This was done first by using a blackboard and securing in rapid fire, reports from the various groups. As large a proportion of these reports as possible was secured verbally, and then written reports were received from all of the rest. These were all compiled in making up the summary which was presented to the general student meeting. From this summarizing meeting of the leaders, from examination of the written reports, and from a discussion with the student speakers, it was evident that there was general agreement on the race question but distinctly four points of view on the war issue. Consequently, plans for the general meeting were made which would reflect the exact status of the thinking of the convention. In this case students who had been nominated from the fifty groups were selected to express these convictions as they had emerged. Therefore the student meeting was planned in order to present the united conviction on the race question, from a Southern white, a Northern white, a Negro, and an Oriental point of view. The four positions on the war question were carefully phrased and a student chosen to present each. The convention session in which these students spoke was one of great power and deep emotion because each person was voicing convictions which had emerged in the group thinking and which were shared by anywhere from a few hundred, as in the case of the minority viewpoints on war, to the united conviction in which most of the five thousand joined.

Sometimes this summarizing is done in a general discussion session of the entire conference, in which the questions considered in the groups are discussed further in the assembly, but the discussion on each question is opened by incidental reports of the viewpoint of the groups, from the floor, by recorders or chairmen.

In conventions the question of findings continually arises.

The former method was to write the findings in advance in commission reports and bring them as proposals to the assembly. In large gatherings now, a committee on summaries is formed which cooperates with the director of discussion and the leaders and recorders in gathering up the conclusions of the conference. At a conference of religious work secretaries at Lakehurst, N. J., a person was appointed to summarize from time to time in the discussion and he worked with a Committee on Findings that summarized the conclusions of the discussion. Several Religious Education Association conventions have had a Committee on Summary which reported at the beginning of each session the summary of the session preceding. These summaries became cumulative and were gathered together with such modification as the developments of the discussion made advisable, as the findings of the conference. They were presented and discussed at the closing session.

This summarizing process as it was carried on at Helsingfors is described in the report.¹

No man, however, in his own group knew how things had gone in the other groups. The leaders had gone out—like the Seventy—two by two, each couple into their group, supported by the third ally—the reporter of the group. On the leaders had fallen the burden of guiding the discussion and of interpretation. On the reporter had fallen the task of crystallizing and summing up the issues and conclusions.

The whole adventure in leadership of such complex groups was new to most of them. No one of them (we believe) had ever before led a group in which over a dozen nationalities, and five or six races, were represented. Few had handled a discussion in two or three languages. The aim of the discussions on the first day, viz., to discover, delimit, and define the areas of conflict and problem in the life of youth today, was capable of opening up every kind of controversial issue. On some of the issues, the convictions on Christian doctrine held by sincere able

¹ See "Youth Faces Life," Report of the Nineteenth World Conference of Y M C A's at Helsingfors, Aug. 1 to 6, 1926.

men on both sides were so strong that they were believed by many to make vigorous, natural, Christian fellowship next to impossible. No one could even guess what the outcome would be.

When, therefore, the leaders came streaming back into the room in the late afternoon for the leaders' meeting, from half past four until six—each fresh from the discussion of his own group, but not knowing a word of what had happened in other groups—the expectancy was tense.

They faced an array of blackboards in front of which stood two interpreters and the director of the discussion process, armed with inexhaustible chalk and good humor.

Swiftly, one by one, each leader threw out the salient points of the discussion in his group in answer to specific questions put by the director. This was done in order to secure a record from all groups of the areas of problem and difficulty faced by youth today. The difficulties were tabulated in their order of importance. The groups' views as to what were the causes of the problems were also listed.

Swiftly each leader's statement was translated aloud by the two interpreters (a German statement into French and English, and so on), while the director rapidly wrote the points down on the blackboards. His trained and disciplined gift of recognizing instantaneously the affiliation of ideas with one another enabled him to classify the issues on the blackboard as quickly as they were expressed.

As a result, in an hour and a half, the whole mind of the fifty groups composing the entire conference as expressed in the day's discussion, was expressed, and the main outlines of its conclusions arranged in as orderly a fashion as the very turmoil and confusion of the thought itself would permit.

Having all this in mind, an additional aid to clearness had been provided. The reporter of each group had made an independent written record of the work of his group during the day. These records were taken at the close of the leaders' meeting at six o'clock by a carefully selected international, interracial group of sixteen men and a boy, and were rapidly scrutinized in a small room—again with the director and another array of blackboards classifying the results.

Now, after 7 P. M., three persons, chosen from the group of summarizers, were charged with the difficult task of preparing ten-minute speeches that would—in French, German, and English—sum up the results of all this analysis of the discussions of

the day, at the evening session of the whole conference at 8:15. These three speeches were, however, obviously of the highest importance, for they brought to the knowledge of the whole conference a real perspective of the trend of its thought day by day. Each delegate, instead of being confined to a knowledge of what had been said in the room where his own discussion group met, now found in those ten-minute speeches the doors of all the other forty-nine rooms opened so that he could hear the collective voice of the conference.

The Unity of the Program

The ideal plan in a conference is to have a completely mobile program and speakers and leaders available for the entire period. Under these circumstances, it is possible to make a schedule day by day and have the conference meet by groups or in large assembly as the development of the thought demands. Such complete mobility is not always possible. In such case it is wise to arrange the day for an alternation of group discussion and platform sessions. The women student conferences have sometimes had discussions in the morning and platform meetings in the evening with the summary just before the evening address. This gives opportunity for the leaders' meeting in the afternoon. At Helsingfors discussions were held for two and a half hours in the morning and one and a half hours in the afternoon. The summaries and the platform addresses were given in the evening. The leaders' meeting took place between the afternoon groups and the evening session; but this meant too great a strain upon those who summarized the discussions, because of the shortness of time.

The Division into Groups

Special attention must be given to the division into groups to be sure that they are representative. The simplest plan is to take an alphabetical division, putting all whose names began with certain letters of the alphabet in one group. At Indianapolis the registration numbers were used, all the one's and the fifty-one's were in one group and the twos and the fifty-

two's in another, etc. In this way fifty groups of one hundred each were formed and usually delegations were scattered. At another convention, numbers were made covering the various groups and the delegates drew for their group. These are all random groupings.

In some conferences more care is needed to make them truly representative. So for the Boys Work Assembly the delegates were first divided at random. Then a person who knew the delegates reasonably well made such rearrangements as were necessary to have in each group representatives of all sections of the country, of state, national, and local work, of big and small associations. In preparation for Helsingfors, Henri Johannot literally spent days arranging the groups so that in each there were at least several nationalities, proportionately representative of the Far Eastern, Latin, Slavonic, Teutonic, and Anglo-Saxon cultures; and wherever possible not more than two languages to be used in the discussion (though a number of the groups were three-language groups). One big factor in the success of the conference was the fact that each group proved to be an international conference in miniature, so, as Dr. Mott said, really forty-one international conventions were being held cooperatively and simultaneously.

Discussions of the Entire Assembly

In assemblies of up to one thousand, it is possible to get genuine discussion in the whole group provided the hall is reasonably suitable and the director a skilled discussion chairman. At a Silver Bay Women's Conference, six hundred girls had several open forum discussions. The one on the war question, lasting two hours, was on a particularly high level. While only seventy-five of the total number spoke, they really represented the thinking of practically the whole group, if the interest and expression on the faces were an indication. A great deal of thinking took place, a real spirit of worship was engendered, and something of a united will was reached. Where there is a large assembly discussion, it is necessary for

the chairman to be sure that every point of view has a spokesman, and particularly to see to it that the minorities have a chance. A chairman who is sensitive to the bodily expressions of a group will note that when a certain person is speaking, fifty other persons are showing their approval and this one is really their spokesman, while perhaps two hundred others may be showing opposition and others only casual interest. He will work away until the opposition has full chance and every point of view has been heard. At the World Court Conference, at Princeton, the sentiment was overwhelmingly for the Court, and the problem was to get any consideration for the minority which represented some very able persons from well-known colleges. The chairman made a special point in the discussion of calling out this minority, and the best part of the discussion was the effort to understand the minority point of view and to meet it, not argumentatively, but on the basis of evidence.

Some day, to help the hearing problem, we shall probably have, in assemblies of this kind, speaking microphones in various parts of the auditorium to which a person can move easily from his seat. Even where the conference is as large as one thousand, discussion by the total assembly is a possibility and probably preferable to set speeches.

Modification of a Group Thinking Procedure

Other plans for securing greater participation are being used which are not so completely on the group thinking basis. In some conferences the morning is divided into a number of class periods at each of which one or more classes are offered. Each course is an independent unit throughout the conference, just as a course in a college or university is independent of the courses in other departments. In some conferences there are several classes each hour, so that there is an opportunity for election, as in a college, and so that no group need to be too large for effective participation. The conference program is a collection of independent courses or items, each a unit in

itself, though planned in relation to the general purpose of the conference. Such a conference is conducted on what might be called horizontal stratification. Provision is made for counselling delegates and the thought is that each delegate will unify the program within himself by his choice of courses. Whether discussion and participation are secured by this plan depends upon the person in charge of a particular hour, just as the participation of persons in a college or university class depends upon whether the professor chooses and is able to use this method.

The first modification toward more complete group thinking was to have discussions, paralleling the addresses and other features in the program, where the delegates could consider the problems which the development of the program had raised. While the platform addresses and a set program were still in control, the plans for the discussions were made day by day on the basis of the questions within the program of most concern to the student delegates. The next development was to give to the conference as a whole a theme, and in relation to this to determine a theme for each day. In this the personal Bible study, the discussion groups, and the platform meetings all were planned to contribute to the theme of the day. The platform still tended to dominate, and the discussion groups were planned to consider what was raised for discussion by the platform; but each day formed a unit and the conference was planned as a whole. The discussion then became more nearly a part of a general educational scheme.

Conferences and conventions, as now conducted, are at various stages from speaking convention to a complete group-thinking conference. Those interested in more adequate group thinking may take the conference at whatever stage it is, and on the basis of the suggestions of this chapter, move as rapidly as conditions warrant to a conference in which group thinking is effectively possible.

APPENDIX III
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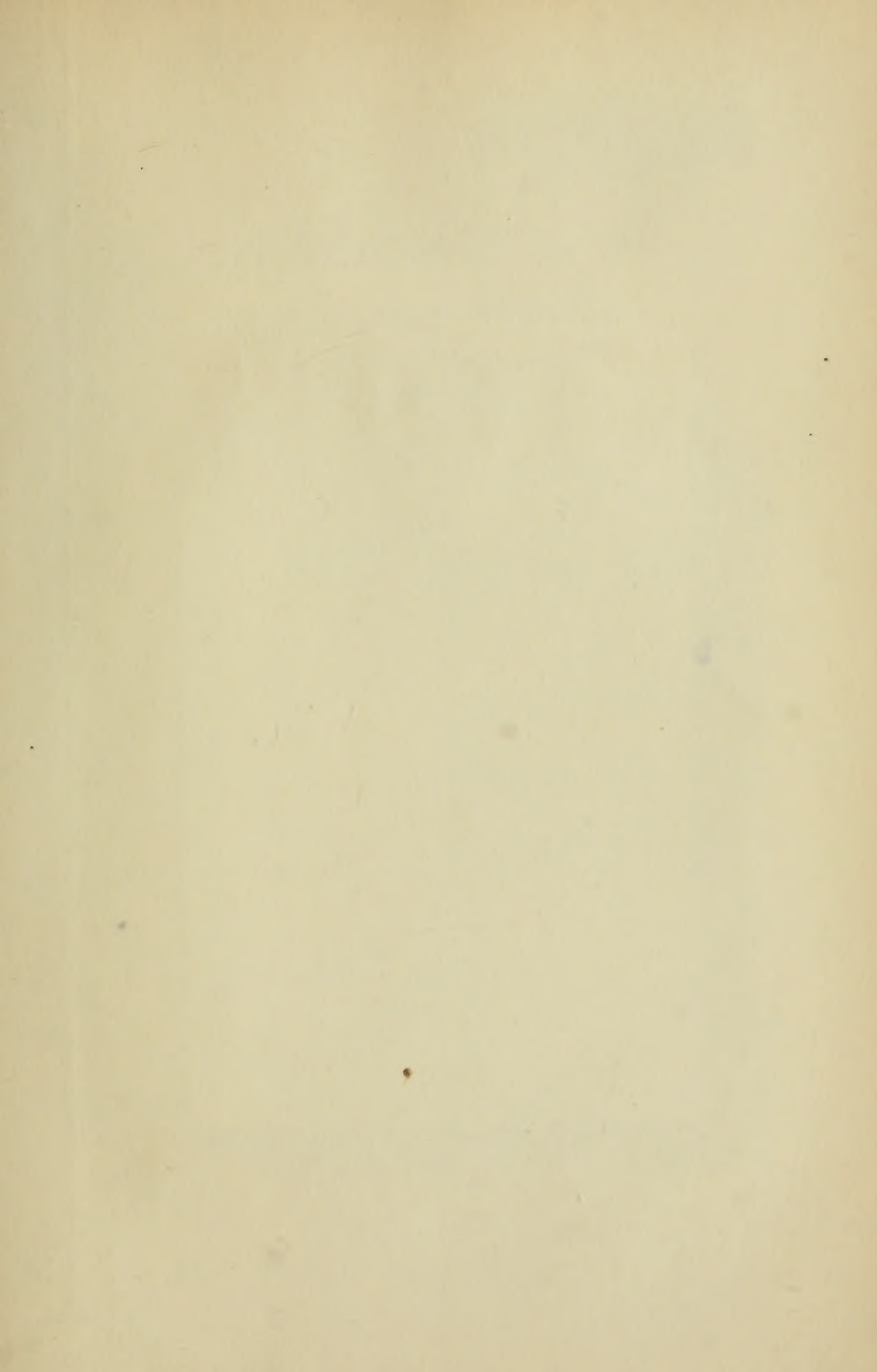
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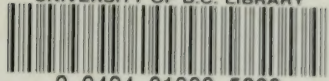


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